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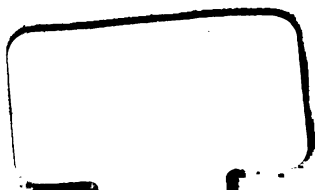
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*Ingenioso*

Fiction, American.



# INGEMISCO.

BY

FADETTE, *poète.*

[Reeves; Marion Cuthbert Leppin]

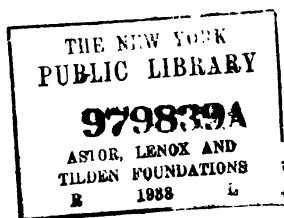
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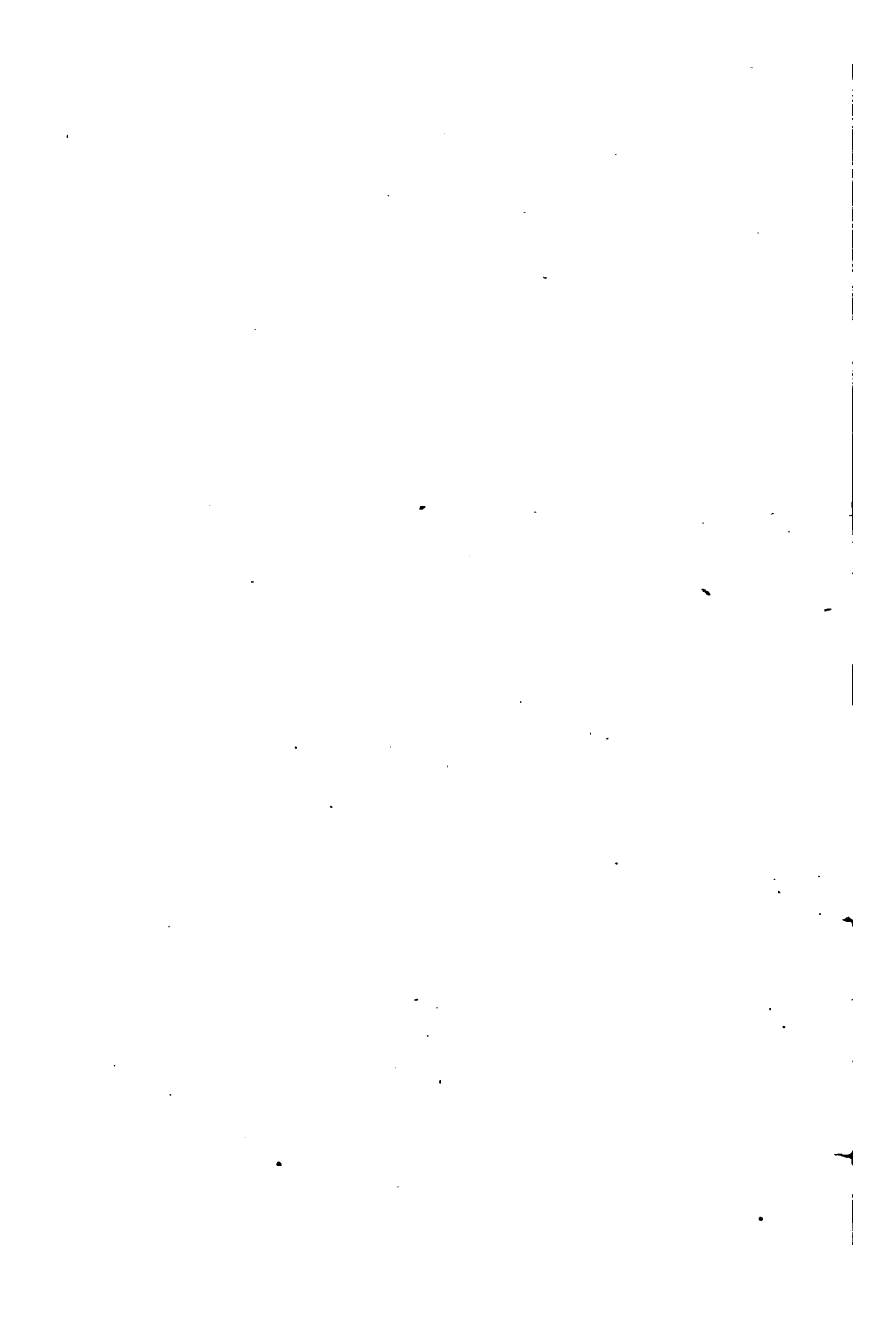
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WILL MY KINSMAN,  
REV. DR. PALMER,

OF NEW-ORLEANS,

ALLOW ME GRATEFULLY TO INSCRIBE TO HIM A DREAM OF TRAVEL  
AND ROMANCE, DREAMED IN THE NIGHT-WATCHES OF OUR  
COUNTRY, WHEN "INGEMISCO," NOT "ALL'S WELL,"  
WAS THE BURDEN OF THE WATCHMAN'S  
CRY?

BIEB 19 FEB '36



# INGEMISCO.

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## L

"ABOVE me are the Alps,  
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls  
Have pinnaced in clouds their snowy scalps,  
And throned eternity in icy halls  
Of cold sublimity——"

THOSE icy halls are glittering now in crimson and molten gold. The eternal sun has withdrawn to his rest behind those palace-walls, and the gorgeous draperies of his triumphal march through the heavens, yet hang voluminous from the mountain-tops, tossing and swaying in drifting winds, and flaring reflected glory down upon the lake, which stretches broad and clear beneath the village of Lowerz. Precipices shelve with rocky descent to the water, now so tranquil in the early summer twilight that it is well-nigh impossible to recognize in it the slumbering power which, aroused, has overwhelmed in fury these shores and the fairy island resting with gray fortress-ruin on its bosom. From the northward, across from the village, foams the lake's chief tributary down from the mountain heights, now flashing, rainbow-like, in the sunset, now gleaming faintly in some mossy hollow. Here at the



village the green shores slope gradually down, and farther, bowers of the vine, not yet in full purple pomp, dash with shade the peaceful fields of wheat and rye. East, west, and north across the lake, rise mountains densely wooded with beech and oak, and here and there a crest of pines upon a loftier summit—rugged cliffs and fearful steeps softened by pasture-alps of rich, deep verdure. The village itself, quaint and olden-timed, is picturesque enough. The white chapel and its glittering cross upon the hill, "God's Acre," blossoming for the Resurrection around; down in yonder glen the gray monastery hid amid the trees, save the one heavy square tower from which solemnly swells the vesper bell; and here the rows of pink and green and many-tinted cottages in midst of gardens and snow-drift orchards. Foremost in conscious superiority stands the inn, in all the glories of vine-shadowed balconies, overhanging walnut gables, and alluring arbors inviting the wayfarer to the refreshing bowl of coffee, or, as appears by that group of jovial village autocrats, to the foaming tankard and the pipe of good-fellowship.

But few would have staid to give a more than passing glance to village, lake, or mountain beauty, while Margaret Ross stood leaning there upon the gate. Her closely-fitting dark cloth riding-habit concealed not a curve of the graceful figure, not too slight for her stature, which was rather above the average height of woman. She had doffed her black-plumed hat, and masses of wavy dark-brown hair flowing in the light as though a lost golden-red ray of sunset lingered there, drooped, loosened by her late ride and the evening breeze, low upon the slender throat. A strangely attractive face—one that, glanced at for an

instant in passing, days afterward would haunt your memory like the rhythm of a long-ago forgotten poem, or like the half-dreamed childish day-dream which was wont to flit before your drowsy eyes on a sunny May noontide, as you lay—forgetting the dreaded tinkle of the distant school-bell in the nearer tinkle of the bees—beneath the white elder-boughs at the edge of the brook, in that shadowy dingle we all know so well. That dreamy gaze—the melancholy mouth—the low broad brow—bore no slight resemblance to the mournful loveliness of the poet's Evangeline. Yet as she turned again to the gentleman at her side, a smile like sunlight flashing from her eyes, it needed not the clear blue of those eyes, the dazzling fairness of the brow, the faint blush-rose of the cheek, to distinguish the Scottish girl from the maid of Acadia.

"You sigh, Margaret," he had said with a wistful glance in the bright blue eyes fixed upon her the while she had stood rapt in reverie, her gaze afar—he bowing his fair young noble head, among the clustering curls of which one looked for the helmet's imprint. So did the innate knightly spirit stamped on handsome glowing face and lithe and hardy figure, revert from the carpet-knights of modern chivalry to the golden days of eld, when the worshiped gold was a ladye's sunny tress—ere yet the "Almighty Dollar" had usurped the throne.

"Did I sigh?" she returned softly. "It must be that looking up here, where

'Nature's heart  
Beats strong among her hills,'

one feels a pulsation of those lofty heart-throbs—an aspiration—a vague yearning after far heights to

which few of us are strong to attain—mountain-tops of the soul, whence those who dare gain them, look down upon the clouds that lie along yonder low horizon!" And she pointed to a dark drift bearing heavily down through a gap in the mountains, while on the heights above, the sunset glory rested yet.

Her companion kept an instant's moody silence, and when reply he did, it was with some bitterness:

"I was rash enough to dream for a moment that a sigh so wistful and a gaze so absent must be in memoriam of far Scotland; forgetting how transient is the in memoriam of old scenes, old friends, old feelings, in a young lady's heart."

She turned and flashed on him one glance of indignant surprise; then averted her head without a word.

"Margaret, forgive me," he cried with quick regret. "If you knew the torment of fear of change in the loved one, you could not be angry. Old times are swept away in all this hurry of travel and new scenes. I seem to be losing my hold on you—so many come between and jostle us apart. Would to God we had never left our own old Highlands. They were high as our childish aspirations ever soared together, and there at least nothing might part us. Will it be so ever again?"

She smiled at his passionate words, and laid her hand upon his arm with a caressing gesture, as she said:

"Harry, a few months can not sweep away all those years. Dearer than ever are they all—those old familiar haunts, this old familiar—shall I say friend, who has so little faith in me? But look—only look at Alice!" she added, her smile deepening as Harry followed the direction of her glance. "No, not there;

at the round table beneath that great maple. See how she is gossiping with that buxom matron and the rosy-cheeked girl, a truant shepherdess of Watteau's, I am sure. And with what an air of complacency that queer old fellow—is he not Pickwick in sky-blue shorts?—rubs his plump hands together, listening. The witch! I am afraid she's no canny, for beyond a doubt she has thrown a glamour over that entire group. Alas for the 'Mutter-sprache'!—her German is most abominable jargon. Do you remember how she would torment poor old Herr Grimm, declaring Nature never intended that a douce Scottish lassie who could take no flights, should go beyond *wie geht's*, else the road to learning would have no barriers, wee gates or any others. See, she is beckoning to us. Let us go—that grimace betokens merriment on foot."

The younger sister, that fairy "lassie wi' the lint-white locks" falling in a perfect shower of short curls half vailing the merry blue eyes, held out in one rosy dimpled hand—as she leaned her round pink chin in the palm of the other, her elbow resting on "the round table beneath the great maple"—a great bun from the plate the matron was pressing hospitably upon her. And she continued nod and beck until, the new-comers drawing near, she bent forward, still looking at Harry, and said something in an undertone which deepened the red in the apple cheek of the shepherdess.

"What the devil is the girl about now?" was Harry's nervous mental questioning. For dire experience through fifteen years of wardship under Mr. Ross's roof had made him wary of that twinkle in the merry maiden's eye.

Angels might have seemed more closely concerned in her plot, if plot there were, for never was man pres-

ently more ministered unto, than this Harry May was now. The father's huge meerschaum, though unaccepted, quite at his service—the fragrant coffee proffered at the mother's hands—the daughter rapt attention when he spoke, and eyes and mouth rounded to the “ei, ei” comment when he paused.

Evidently he waxed restive under this ordeal, and at last was on the eve of beating a retreat, when Alice, quickly divining his intention, tossed him the skein of yarn which she was winding for their hostess, begging him just to undo for her that one obstinate knot, which really had exhausted her perseverance.

No sooner had she thus entangled him, than up she sprang, twining her arm within her sister's and drawing her away, while with a nod and a smile to Harry, she dared him in English to enact the Alexander.

Harry rose as if to follow, but the good dame interposed with a timely question, and he remained, leaning against the giant trunk of the over-spreading maple, impatiently polite. Gordian knot was but a mere loop to his entanglement. Interrogation, exclamation, labyrinths of description, invectives upon these mountains where rocks are the crops most plentiful—besides, they shut out the view so! Thus the traveled Netherland burgomaster.

“How much longer will Harry's patience or politeness stand that test? He allows people to do what they will with him, though he has spirit, too,” Margaret exclaimed in an irritated tone as she and Alice, arm in arm, went slowly down the garden-walk in the faint moonlight.

“He keeps a store of patience for you, impatient Maggie mine. And by the way, is not that being

counterparts?" and Alice looked up with a mischievous smile into her sister's face.

"What have you been scheming against him? For scheming you have been, that is evident," the other said, waiving the question.

Alice laughed merrily.

"Revenge! revenge!" she answered. "You know, or probably you don't, how Harry took me to task this morning for having, as he terms it, blazoned abroad your engagement while at Unterseen. I told you, you remember, of my inadvertent admission of it. But Harry attacked me in such force that in the confusion I could rally not even a single lame apology, and——"

"So! Harry is tenacious of the secret!" Margaret interrupted, flushing.

"Nonsense, Madge. So far as he is concerned, he would have it proclaimed from the mountain-tops as a warning to all aspiring fellow-travelers that this Jung Frau is inaccessible as her icy mountain sister. But to my revenge. I told him how my Unterseen interlocutrice had numbered him foremost in my train, and asked if I should have left her in that belief. He replied, curtly enough, that my name was my own, but that he would not have you annoyed by the public joining of yours with his. Therefore, as my name is my own, and he professes indifference as to his, Madame Rumor shall report that he and I are the *promessi sposi*. The slight hint I have given yonder worthy party, will be quite sufficient for the purpose. Madame Rumor will vouch for it on authority of intimate friends of the young lady. Baron Starnberg is here, and he will most assuredly take the hint, and transfer his *devoirs* from poor little me to 'one ver'

handsome Fräulein, of one ver' noble—what you call atmosphere.' You recollect that unique compliment, and Harry's uneasiness thereat. Indeed, it was that which suggested my scheme, as you call it, on hearing the Baron's name among the titled alphabet of guests the dame rehearsed for my benefit before I called you."

"Alice! shall I quote compliment against compliment? You very well know that atmosphere was not by half so congenial as certain airs and graces familiar to your fairysnip. But where is the Baron, that we have not seen him?"

"Off on some hunting expedition for the day, I believe. There is quite a party staying here—a German baroness and her brother, an English visitor, and I don't know who beside. I do hope the carriage won't be repaired for two or three days. Lowerz and fun forever!"

"Are you not hasty, Alice? Your baroness may be fat, her brother smoky, the English milor from Paddington, and the 'who beside' not so very fascinating as to make you oblivious of Luzerne and Baden in the distance. But your mystery? there is something yet unexplained. Why were Herr Bürgermeister and comely Frau so marked in their attentions to Harry? and what did you say to make the comely maiden blush so intensely?"

"Oh! a few innuendoes," laughed Alice, "for which the famous young gentleman owes a debt of gratitude. For I created him Lord of the Isles, crowned him gracefully with laurel, gave him an ardent admiration for red cheeks and flaxen braids, and, his hand not 'being just now free to offer it,' put his heart in his pocket within reach of a daring damsel. And now

permit me in turn one question. Did you really so much dislike that report of your engagement?"

Margaret did not reply. She was watching a skiff freighted with two gentlemen and a lady, which was making for the bank directly before her.

"Look, Alice, who can that be? Is he not like our——"

"Exile of Erin! It is he or his wraith! My beating heart, be still!" Alice cried, ecstatically clasping her hands.

The boat gained the shore, and its passengers disembarked—two gentlemen and a lady, dark and bright, very French, very piquant. She came slowly up the bank, two tiny well-gloved hands folded over the arm of her fair-haired companion, chatting gayly with both in a breath.

The girls at the gate started forward with an exclamation of surprise, and at the same instant she looked up. There was a simultaneous rush, a perfect overwhelming of hastily reiterated embraces, and delighted murmurs of "*Mignonne, quel plaisir! la bienvenue!*"

"What freak of fortune has whirled so far into these forests two such votaries of Paris as the Baroness Waldien and Mr. More? We looked upon you as the city boulevards," Margaret said, as she shook hands cordially with the taller and darker of the men.

"So, I fancy, did Paris," he replied. "But I thought it as well to give it a lesson in self-reliance; so one morning I and my friend here—permit me to introduce Count Falkenstein, Baroness Waldien's brother. Baroness, had you any special reason for leaving him like a naughty boy in the background? Well, Falkenstein and I found ourselves at Rome, and



soon thereafter the boulevards of the Baroness, Baron Waldien being summoned to Paris by the illness of a friend. 'Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good, Miss Alice—may I hope you do not so consider that which has just wafted us across from Isle Schaanau?"

"The landlady won't, at all events!" she mocked. "And did the same wind transport you from Rome?"

"I yield to none," he returned, "my claim upon the brilliant idea of spending a few weeks in the Forest Cantons before meeting the Baron at Baden. Need I add that the idea and the knowledge, through the Baroness, of your destination, were simultaneous?"

"Ma foi!" cried the Baroness, lifting her hands. "When Max he tell two three times it must him see my belle Anglaise! He in despair when I draw her picture—he go the end of the world for her to meet. And, *désirée*," she whispered, laying a light touch on Margaret's arm. "You will like him well, let him be your Schatz—he come the long of this voyage to see you, express."

Margaret blushed and wished her friend less enthusiastic, for she met the eyes of her destined Schatz fixed upon her, and began to fear he had heard the whisper. She turned, saying:

"And what are you going to do with yourself in the wildwood, Mr. More?"

"Did you ever read Peter Schlemyl, Miss Ross? Well, I am going to be a more merciful shadow. But if you weary of me beforehand, only say you desire no More agreeable society, and I decamp, leaving you in Peter's wofully shadowless plight, and the Count here to play twilight after the gorgeous sunshine in which I appear."

"Beware!" Margaret warned. "Are there no fem-

inine Oliver Twists, the burden of whose cry shall be ever 'More, More'?"

"C'est celà même," put in the Baroness. "I know not who may be your Oliver Twist, but it is this that I hear, I see, at cher Paris, at Rome, at Florence—by all where we go. Toujours M. More this—M. More that—and the pretty young girls looking comme ça!" And she swept round, flirting her fan and looking over her shoulder at him with so coquettish an air of petite maîtresse, that a general laugh followed.

"Oh!" cried Margaret, after an instant's pause, "I have not all this time heard of my especial friend the Baron. Mamma and I were talking of him only this morning. You know he is as great a favorite with her as with me. I hope he has not forgotten me. I often think of our many pleasant walks and talks in Rome, and how he enlightened my ignorance on more than one occasion. Scolding and ridiculing as little as a guide-book, and ten thousand times more entertaining."

"And he, he calls you his ne plus ultra, always. I am going to be jealous, well jealous," said the smiling wife.

"Ne plus ultra—not beyond More;" that gentleman translated. "Really, ladies, if you give me my dues so openly, you will also have to furnish pistols and coffee for two. Here is my friend now, looking intensely desirous to pitch me instanter into the lake. Why should he regard me so savagely? Quite a personable young fellow, as you see," patting the amused Count patronizingly on the shoulder—"comme il faut, à la militaire—(left Paris to practice my French, you understand)—quite five feet ten; by his own mental measurement, six and a half. Fine Saxon appearance.

Bewitching fair moustache. Bewitching catalogue, is it not? And yet, yes, he certainly looks envious, and of me. True, I am six feet, even by the standard of my most intimate of friends. But alas! my nose also is aspiring, and the *tout ensemble* inclines *tant soit peu* toward the—Oh! Hibernia hath the burden of many heavy crimes upon her green shoulders. She has killed me entirely. Then what is it the worshipful the Herr Count can envy me? My observation—penetration—my—what is it, Miss Alice?”

“A gentleman of your penetration can not need my assistance”—she returned laughingly. “But look, here comes Harry May, and I see mamma and papa seated already over there at that table. Are you aware of the attraction? Margaret says the good people are to give us most delicious schmarn—don’t you like it?—and strawberries and cream. Come,” she ended, nodding to him and following her sister, who in different terms had extended the same invitation to the Baroness and Count Falkenstein.

“Alice,” whispered Margaret, as she stood aside a moment, avoiding the flower-border and yielding the path to some passers-by, “are you going to complete the capture of our British Lion? Did you ever see such a curiosity? An accurate portrait-painter, too. The ‘personable young fellow’ will prove an acquisition to our party, I prophesy, although as yet he has only made a bow.”

## II.

"~~Strains~~ the fair ladye  
Close to the river side,  
Which runneth on with a merry tone,  
Her merry thoughts to guide.  
It runneth through the trees,  
It runneth by the hill,  
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found  
A way more pleasant still.  
Margret—Margret—"

whose smile, coming and going with those passing thoughts, is lighter than the rippling moonlit smile of the waters where rests her gaze, as though she saw realities more vivid than those reflected drooping trees—the rocks, the gray mountains, the cottage above on the cliff, where for a week past has been domiciled our party, the landlord of the Lowerz Hostetrie having given it up to their exclusive use.

Presently, as she sways absently back and forward on her grape-vine swing in the leafy covert above the lake bank, she is aware of other tones than those of the ripples on the shore. But as they chime in gayly with the current of her thoughts and of the waters, she hears them no more distinctly than these, until, as the speakers now pace up and down the beach below her overhanging crag, which conceals them from

her view, the tones, growing earnest, come to her with words.

"I tell you, More, I was never so in earnest in my life."

"What! not about the fair saint of the Lisbon Cathedral? Faith, I thought she had won you over so entirely that I considered you an important clause of mass, vespers, and non anglus—indeed, sed angelus. Though whether your orisons were to the veiled saint in the transept or the unveiled saints in the niches, were a knotty point in theology."

"Pah! Nonsense! Love may be sometimes blind; but hang me if Cupid, or Venus either, wears illimitable yards of black lace forever. As well fall in love with the Iron Mask. Now this girl hides behind no veil, and the stronger the light, the more certainly one sees her without flaw. Schiller says well of her——"

More stopped short in his walk and surveyed his friend curiously from head to foot, then indulged his feelings in a long low whistle ending in a shout of laughter.

"Whew! Halloo, Falkenstein"—as that gentleman turned indignantly on his heel—"beg ten thousand pardons, I do indeed; but really, this Benedick a married man! However, consider me on my knees, if you will, to your offended dignity—your offended lady-love, either or both."

"Schlechterdings nicht! not necessary to both," returned the mollified Count. "You do too much of the one, as it is. Just take your lazy length out of my way in future, will you? But Benedick is yet very far from the metamorphosis you find so ludi-

crous. She treats me capriciously, More. Your countrywomen, they in verity I do not understand. So are they as their climate—to-day all sunshine, to-morrow all impenetrable fog. Our women never flirt. Yours, fortunate the poor devil who knows when they are flirting. Now only this morning, did you observe how she——”

“Try a flirtation yourself, Max. You Germans are too honestly sentimental. You should have a heart like mine—British patent—perfectly elastic—will hold a dozen or two, or contract closely round one. Yet if the one give too much strain upon it, out she drops, and leaves nor space nor trace.”

The Count's handsome mouth was expressive of much silent contempt, which even the “bewitching fair moustache” could not entirely conceal. Another turn was taken in silence, during which Margaret rose in her second attempt to effect an escape unseen. But the Count stopped directly before her retreat, and she could only shrink back behind the leafy screen, having already involuntarily played the eavesdropper too long to risk being caught in the act.

“It is said,” Falkenstein began abruptly, “that she is a Brant—fiangée—betrothed, you call it? Is that true? You have known her long—many months; tell me if it be so?”

More smiled.

“We are not so frank in these affairs as you,” he said, “and I can add very little to your own information. You mean, of course, young May. How did you hear this?”

“Indirectly through a friend of hers.” Margaret smiled as she remembered Alice's prediction concern-

ing Madame Rumor, but looked annoyed as Falkenstein muttered with a heavy sigh:

"Well that I have not made an egregious fool of myself."

"Nay, man, never lose heart for that," exclaimed More kindly, clapping him on the shoulder. "Love is 'the paradise of fools, to few unknown.' And for your comfort in it, our betrothals, let me tell you, are not like yours. They don't tie one up so confoundedly tight, and this one may prove a slip-knot after all. Besides, who knows that it is not the other sister? Of the two, she would seem more congenial to May. A fine young fellow, yet I am mistaken if he do not find the matrimonial noose of your lady fair the very strongest of leading-strings. For my part, I can only account for the state of his and your optics with regard to the two sisters on the hypothesis of purblindness."

The last two sentences were lost upon Margaret as the speakers passed on finally beyond the cliff. So, more fortunate than eavesdroppers in general, with a smile upon her lips, and a feeling that Mr. More's suggestion as to the betrothed sister had set all right, she clambered up from her rock-bound niche and strolled on toward the cottage.

Some surprise she felt when Falkenstein thus declared himself, for his attentions to her had been somewhat marked. But then, Alice had been so engrossed by Mr. More and several other gentlemen temporarily joining the Ross party. And too, this morning, to which Falkenstein had alluded, she remembered how Alice had shown him a very observable though thoughtless slight, and had waived his invitation to

ride in favor of a scarcely formed engagement with Baron Starnberg. She remembered how Falkenstein had stood in no very amiable mood upon the balcony as they all swept past the inn. But she forgot that, she having formed herself an engagement with Mr. More the evening before, the gloomy brow and distant bow might be differently accounted for.

Conjecture strengthened into firm belief when, as she returned to the cottage and found its little world assembled in the coffee-arbor, she saw Falkenstein at Alice's side, and observed his attentions. When at last he came and stood beside her own chair, or walked restlessly up and down, she attributed his deportment to a very laudable but highly unsuccessful attempt to carry out his friend More's advice.

"Ah! there she is. Just in time, Madge," cried Alice, making room for her sister as she paused in the doorway. "Tenez," handing her a cup of coffee when she had taken her seat; "and you, cavaliers," she added, glancing round as she detected an aside of her father's to Harry May, "don't accuse me of bribery; this is a reward; for I know Margaret is already on our side against the opposition—meaning you two and mamma. What do you think, Margaret—papa and Harry want, or pretend to want, to leave Lowerz to-morrow!"

"Why, papa!" and Margaret turned in dismay to the stalwart, handsome man at her side, to whom she bore a resemblance so striking that Alice declared it exceedingly unmaidenly in her not to blush when strangers called him handsome.

Her face caught the reflection of his smile, and she said gayly:



"Well, if go we must, I hope you have faith to remove mountains; for we can not think of leaving behind the range in Zug if you can stow them away in the carriage-box with the Echo Cave. And to fill up the ravines, pray squeeze in the Egeri See, if you can keep it 'right side up with care.' And for you, Harry, would you beat an ignominious retreat, not having killed a single chamois, while Count Falkenstein has won a beard? And you a Highland hunter too!"

Harry colored, but made no reply. It was evident that he at least had received the suggestion made in jest with earnest pleasure.

"What says mamma?" Margaret asked now, looking somewhat anxiously across the table.

The fair, fragile mamma shook her head, with an arch glance toward Alice, who, really worried, sat pouting half in jest, half earnest.

"Nobody will listen to me," she said, raising her head, laughing, but serious withal; "and yet mine is a most cogent plea for delay. What is a chamois more or less to the ignominy of losing a bear-hunt, and a polar bear at that? You all remember the Polish Count, whom we meet so often in our rambles? Well, Harry and I have a wager depending upon my powers of fascination. Harry declares he invariably glances at Margaret when he bestows that graceful bow in passing. But I know better. The idea! Why, the man has magnificent eyes—I never saw keener!"

"Fairly conquered, Mistress Alice. We remain your willing prisoners," her father said, amid the general laughter.

"Beseeching Mademoiselle to keep us attached to

her own triumphal car," Falkenstein said, gallantly bowing.

"For oh! if there be an Elysium on earth,  
It is this, it is this——"

chimed in Mr. More.

Baron Starnberg seemed not only quite as much attached as Falkenstein to Alice's triumphal car, but quite willing to bow his head beneath any yoke which she might deign to impose. And the lively Baroness clapped her hands in ecstasy over the victory.

"But," began Margaret, as that discussion gave place presently to the discussion of English sandwiches, tea and coffee—"are we doomed to close confinement to this seventh heaven? May we make no excursions, to-morrow, for instance?"

"As you will," laughed Alice, "always provided no one poaches on my hunting-grounds. Do you know all Lowerz says our mysterious Count is in league with his Satanic majesty? That, of course, explains why he lives in solitude and gloom. And that is why strange lights glimmer all the dreary midnight from his ruined castle. When the fishing-boats are out by night on Lake Egeri, sometimes a wild wail of unearthly music sweeps over the water from the dark cloisters. It is a choir of monks who perished there long, long ago, chanting the dirge of his lost soul. And—hush, what is that?" she broke off in a terrified whisper, as the wind lifted and let fall heavily a bough that leaned against the arbor.

Margaret smiled, the Baroness started up with a cry just parting her lips, but catching Margaret's eye reseated herself and archly joined in rallying Alice

upon the ghost she had raised. Then Mrs. Ross said gravely:

"But, my dear child, bear-hunting is not the safest of amusements nor the most appropriate to adventurous damsels. I trust you will not be so insane as to carry your joke too far."

- "Yesterday, when Harry and I met him on the Schwyz road, I was on the eve of carrying it only so far as to fall from my horse—poor innocent sheep—for his especial benefit. But so slight was the glance he bestowed upon me that I would probably have been doomed to the mortification of being picked up by only Harry; besides convicting myself of horse-womanishness so wretched as to lose all hope of ever mounting that magnificent black steed of his, which, by the by, my shocked mamma, is literally my wager."

"Where is your lion's den?" asked Mr. More.

"On the Egeri See, there has he long dwelt. If tomorrow we form one little expedition to the Echo Cave, so may Mademoiselle Elsa have another bow, perhaps"—the Baroness said in her idiomatic broken English.

"Admirable!" cried Margaret—"a large party and a long day. Set forth with the sun, and ride home with the moon. It will be so clear and beautiful," she added, looking up through the boughs at the cloudless starry sky.

The plan pleased all, and all entered into consultations as to whom should be invited, naming over among the travelers, of whom just then there was a goodly number at Lowerz, a list of those titled by birth or agreeability.

"Stay, sixteen," counted Mrs. Ross—"will Dame Echo have space to entertain more?"

"Oh! yes," replied Margaret, who had ere now been one of that dame's visitors; "but do you not think, Baroness, that we have enough? We have named over all our especial friends, I think."

The Baroness declared any addition to this sum of perfections would ruin all; the Baron in an impressive aside murmured something to Alice, of which the words audible were "only one—too many, by far too many, if you do not promise before to ride with me."

While Alice laughed and blushed and gave the promise, Falkenstein pushed back his chair, and stood in moody silence at the entrance, until after a time Margaret rose and exclaiming against the inhospitable reception of the breeze struggling in vain to find a way through the clustering vines, strolled out to the gate, and thence, as Falkenstein joined her, and Alice and the Baroness followed with the Baron and Mr. More, wandered slowly along the shore, listening chiefly to

"The water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds;"

for her companion spoke little. And tired presently with trying to interest him in the next day's expedition, the delightful evening, or the delightful Countess, she took her seat upon the gnarled root of a giant oak at the very water's edge, determined to leave him to the enjoyment of his moodiness.

Then was heard the splash of oars, and in the bright line of light thrown by the moon across the lake, glided a tiny skiff from which, as the rowers now rested

on their oars, swaying to and fro on the waves lengthening in the freshened breeze, floated Alice's bird-like notes, with the Baroness's louder tones—the Baron's full deep base in rich accord.

Margaret took up the chorus, and after a moment Falkenstein chimed in.

"Count Falkenstein!" Margaret exclaimed in surprise. "What a shame to have deprived us of your voice all this while, when it is so far better than the other gentlemen's, except——"

She stopped, blushing, remembering that her exception was not quite in accordance with rules of politeness.

"Go on," he said, with some wounded vanity.

"No. You think me rude, and that is far from my design. If you were not so very unmanageable," she added, smiling, "I would say, as I was about to do, that I would much rather sing with you, your voice accords with mine so much better than Baron Starnberg's."

His eyes brightened, and he stopped in his walk, throwing himself on the bank at her feet.

"Sing, then," he said.

After an instant's pause she began. But when she had sung a few bars and found him still silent, she stopped short.

"I have not the faintest intention of singing alone," she said, looking down upon him questioningly.

"An execrable song," he muttered, absorbed the while in twisting and untwisting a branch of clematis which she had broken off and let fall absently.

"What, 'La donna e mobile!' Your taste is parallel with your mode of expressing it. For myself, I think

it beautiful, and so true. I only wish I could remember the Italian throughout;" and she hummed "False as fair weather—who can believe her?"

He suddenly crumpled the starry blossoms in his hand, and threw them from him with no little energy. She, watching the returning boat, did not observe this, but rose as he resumed his restless walk, and proposed to rejoin the voyagers.

"The stupid fellow!" she commented, as they moved on together; then relenting, "But that naughty sister of mine is indeed enough to drive one distracted."

### III.

"AND the storm is abroad on the mountains. He fills  
The crouched hollows and all the oracular hills  
With dread voices of power. A roused million or more  
Of wild echoes reluctantly rise from their hoar  
Immemorial ambush, and roll in the wake  
Of the cloud whose reflection leaves livid the lake."

THE early beams of sunrise were streaming upon Lake Lowerz, but scarce brighter than Margaret's face, as, equipped for her ride, she left her room to join the party already assembling on the balcony.

"My mother awake, Alison?" she asked of her mother's maid, a staid, elderly personage who was passing as she paused on the threshold, drawing on her gloves.

"No, Miss, not yet."

"What is the matter? Do you want any thing?" Margaret asked, observing that the woman hesitated, with a perplexed expression of countenance.

"Well, yes, Miss Margaret, only I dinna like to fash ye wi' it now. But my leddy's drops are just clean gane, and there isna a bit o' arrowroot in the house, forbye ither things she'll hae need o' the morn. So I thought—canna ye send Hans to Schwyz wi' thae list, Miss Margaret?"

"Hans can not go, my father wants him as guide.

The list must be attended to, however. Give it to me. This is all, is it? But, Alison, you should not have left it to the last moment," Margaret said rather impatiently.

"Miss Margaret forgets Hans hasna been at hame ae day this week."

"Ah! true. It is my own fault. I should have thought of that. Now please don't mention it to my mother, and you shall have every thing as soon as possible. Luise"—to a peasant girl who at that moment made her appearance—"can you guide us to Zug? Do you know the way up the mountain to the Echo Cave?"

"Ach no, mein Fräulein. You remember I have always lived in Glarus until now, and I don't know these mountains."

"Then could you go in to Schwyz to make some purchases for me?"

"I was never in Schwyz but once, gracious Fräulein. I should lose myself in those great clattering streets."

Margaret smiled at the "great clattering streets" of Schwyz, and at the frightened look which accompanied the words. .

"Then you shall not go alone. You will not be afraid of the great streets with me? Away, then, to the inn, for a pony, and let me see you at the gate in five minutes."

Luise hastened upon her errand, and Margaret walked with slower step into the balcony. It was a greater disappointment than she chose to acknowledge to herself, this giving up of her long-planned excursion. For although she had once before taken



the same ride, yet it was during the absence of Mr. Ross and Harry May upon a hunting-party, and she had quite looked forward to introducing them to the haunt of the echoes.

Still, her brow was unclouded when Harry lifted her into the saddle, and she cantered on between him and Count Falkenstein, chatting gayly, until after two or three miles was reached the junction of two roads, the one turning northward to Zug, the other branching off in almost the opposite direction toward the little city of Schwyz. Here Margaret checked her horse, beckoning at the same moment to Luise, who rode behind with Hans.

"What is the matter, Margaret? Both your guides inefficient?" called Alice on observing her pause.

"Luise and I are upon a private expedition of our own. We are not of your party this morning. We go to Schwyz."

"Madge, this will never do," exclaimed her father, riding up. "We can not at all do without you. What is it you want in Schwyz? Some nonsensical shopping, I'll warrant." Then as she shook her head, smiling, he said, "Well, if it is important, send Hans. Or stay, he is our guide. Give me your commission."

"Let me go, Miss Ross," offered the Count.

"Or me," echoed Harry.

"Yes, you indeed!" she mocked, shaking her whip at him. "A pretty bungle you would make, truly, of laces and ribbons! No, indeed! I prefer to manage my own affairs, and you will all repair forthwith to Zug."

"How provoking!" cried Alice. And regrets and expostulations were showered upon the deserter by

the sixteen friends *en masse*. To all of which she turned a deaf ear.

"Let me at least go with you," whispered Harry imploringly.

"No, no"—then in a lower tone—"I am really obliged to go, for my mother; but the party must not lose another. Now go, there's a good Harry, for my father's sake."

"For your sake, Margaret?"

"Well, well—only go!" she replied, turning her horse's head.

"Methinks, May," Falkenstein observed, laying his hand upon her bridle, "that we would have but little difficulty in carrying away this hard-hearted young lady bodily."

"At your peril attempt it," Margaret answered in merry defiance. "My faithful Glamis has not borne me through so many dangers by flood and field, to be daunted now by a pair of recreant knights. And now, to end this much ado about nothing, farewell, my quondam comrades."

"Willful woman maun hae her way," resignedly quoted Mr. Ross. "You certainly are fickle as the wind, Margaret."

She made no answer, but beneath the drooping plume of her hat her cheek crimsoned as she bowed farewell.

"Any commands for Dame Echo?" shouted Mr. More as they rode on.

"My regrets. And beg her to remember the brilliant speeches she may overhear to-day, and report faithfully to me on my next visit."

And once more nodding good-by, she bounded away,

It was a lovely June morning, with that exciting freshness in the air peculiar to mountain regions. Returning home, her purchases completed, Margaret felt an almost irresistible longing to wander at will, over hill and through valley, each rising ground seeming to point the way to one higher and yet more beautiful, until the horizon closed in lofty ranges, with here and there a snowy peak gleaming like a white cloud in the distance. It was a market-day, and the road and byways gay with lively groups of peasants passing to and from Schwyz. Meadows emerald green beneath a cloudless heaven; grassy slopes, and wild rocky cliffs walling in the road; brooks dashing, glad-voiced, down the steep declivities, or rippling lazily along beneath the shadows of whitening orchards; wagons glowing like so many vegetable and fruit-gardens, drawn by sturdy horses of the district, guided by men whose cheery voices rouse the echoes with the popular Volks-Lied, or women, shepherdess-like in broad-brimmed hats, gay bodices, and full white sleeves—these are Schwyz pictures on a bright summer morning.

As Margaret rode on slowly, unwilling to lose detail or scene of interest, a green-clad mountaineer passed by, bearing a rifle on his shoulder, and whistling as he journeyed. He bowed low with an arch glance at Luise.

"That is the landlord's Fritz," whispered she to her young mistress. "See, he is taking the road to Low-erz. Why not let me give him your parcels, and ride on to Zug? The fellow will be glad enough to oblige me, that he will." And she tossed her pretty head,

while the long ends of the black kerchief knotted over her fair hair fluttered in the breeze.

This proposal coincided too well with Margaret's wishes to be rejected, and mistress and maid were soon speeding on, over hill and through hollow, and never drawing bridle-rein until the precipitous banks of Lake Egeri, and the rugged mountain-steeps rising abruptly from the water's edge, burst upon their view.

"That was like the wild hunter of the ballad, Luise." And Margaret hummed:

"Und hurre, hurre, vorwärts ging's,  
Feld ein und aus, Berg ab und an.  
Stets ritten Reiter rechts und links  
Zu beiden Seiten neben an!"

as she dropped the bridle on Glamis's neck, and staid to let him drink at a rivulet gushing out beneath a massive rock and foaming downward to the lake.

Leaving the horses securely tethered by the roadside, Margaret, looping up the long skirt of her habit, led the way up the mountain, agile and unwearied as the young peasant.

"See, mein Fräulein, what I have here for you," Luise said as, breathless at last, her mistress dropped upon a mossy cliff commanding road and lake.

She drew from her capacious pocket, as she spoke, a small morocco-bound volume.

"My sketch-book! O Luise! how thoughtful! But what induced you to bring it when you knew I was going to Schwyz?"

"All young ladies are not so hard to persuade as you, Fräulein. But if you sit here, may be we may see the gentlemen and ladies pass."

Luise drew forth her knitting, while Margaret be-

gan her sketch. Gifted though she was, pencil could scarce do justice to the scenery. Above, crag towered upon crag, in all the fantastic imagery of gaunt bare rocks, rising in many a turret and natural battlement, and loftier summits surmounted by a single stately pine, tossing green, banner-like branches defiantly to the breeze. 'Twould seem that Echo, whose voice is heard among these cliffs, had fled behind their bulwarks as to a citadel of refuge. Here and there are the ragged steeps relieved by waves of verdure rolling to the foot of some precipitous ascent, while crests of snowy wind-flowers rise like foam upon the green billows. Below, descend the mountains abruptly to the lake, leaving but a narrow pass for the road. Following the windings of that road toward the west, Margaret's gaze rested upon the grim gray towers of a castle, or more properly castle-monastery, in which, in ancient, troublous times, monks gray and grim as those their ruined strongholds, had intrenched themselves. Granite-built, three turrets of rude Gothic architecture stood strong and stalwart still, while beyond, with low massy-columned cloisters and arched chapel between, were three others, of which two mouldered away beneath the touch of time and the ruder stroke of violence—even as the zealous hands that reared them, and the faithful hearts and true, long since stilled beneath the ruins. The ivy, as if in mockery of the destroyer, throws the banner of immortality even where destruction has been most victorious. Far to the east, towering over all, rises Mount Einsiedlen's jagged summit, whence surges forth a flood bound in the frosts of ages, its angry waves brilliant in icy glitter in the sunshine. Almost beneath Margaret's

feet, so sudden the descent, lay Lake Egeri, far below the road. In gay profusion shrub and flower clung to every foothold in the cliffs, and trees drooped their branches into the placid waters. Placid indeed at Margaret's first glance; but now, as she turns again, troubled, and dashing madly against the rocks.

"Only look at the lake, Luise," she cried after a moment; "hardly a breeze is stirring here, yet the waves are ruffled as possible. What an angry little sea!"

She did not turn to Luise in speaking, else she would have been startled by the sudden dismay clouding the girl's face as she lifted her eyes from her work. She rose hastily, saying:

"Gracious Fräulein, perhaps the gentlemen have taken another road from the mountains. May I go ask at yonder cottage?" pointing to one at a short distance, where the horses had been left.

Margaret nodded. Luise bounded away, and soon disappeared in the windings of the pathway.

Margaret sat for another moment more, watching the waves; then to gain another view, mounted a loftier ascent, and wandered on, unmindful of the distance, until, on attempting to retrace her steps, she found herself at a loss in what direction to turn, and quite out of sight of her guiding point, the lake. One crag so like another—chasms opening before her—rocky walls rearing themselves in her pathway—were so bewildering that at every step she wandered farther and farther into the recesses of the mountain.

The wind now swept in gusts through the forests, and, looking up, she perceived for the first time that the sky was darkening with approaching tempest.

Startled, she hurried on, she knew not whither, until her way was suddenly cut short by a ravine yawning at her very feet. She stopped, and trembling in every limb, leaned with closed eyes against a giant cliff that blocked the path hopelessly upon the other hand.

She was no coward, but the prospect daunted her for a moment. The very atmosphere was murk and heavy with portent. The darkness deepened momentarily. The storm must ere long break forth, and she alone, unsheltered. And even should she be unharmed by its fury, night must come before her friends could seek the lost. And had she not heard weird tales of travelers wandering up lone mountains, who never, never wandered down again? Only last year, among these very Alps—— But resolutely she put away these thoughts, pressing her hands upon her eyes to shut out dread visions; then, calm and self-controlled, looked round. Broad and deep lay the ravine below, the precipitous sides dotted with clumps of bushes, while, their tops many, many feet beneath her, tall trees had taken root among the crags at the bottom. But the chasm narrowed where she stood, and a heavy newly-fallen oak, whose branches yet were leafy, spanned it from brink to brink. Could she cross it?

Beyond, through a cleft in the rocks she caught the ghastly white gleam of the long-lost lake in the far distance. Dared she leave that guide, and trust herself helpless again among these cliffs? If she could but hear a human voice amid this solitude! "Luise! Luise!" and at every cry her voice rang in sharper, steadier eagerness. Now she fancied she heard answering shouts, and anon her heart died within her as

the sounds died away, and she knew them but the mockery of her own voice. Suddenly a deeper sound arose—so deep and wild that her lips blanched in terror as she listened. Well she knew that awful soughing through the distant pines, now shrieking aloud in agony, now sinking low in stifled sobbing. Often in her own native highlands had she listened to the wailing of the storm-wind, as if in chieftain's pibroch. But deeper, wilder far, the voice of the Alpine tempest. It struck upon her heart, a prophecy of evil-boding, and at once with a flash of memory Luise's anxious manner, as she parted from her, recurred. She thought of the dear ones, perhaps to be exposed to the violence of the coming storm, and it lost its terrors for herself.

Urged by the longing to hear of them, without a moment's hesitation she set her foot upon the precarious bridge. Fearless, thoughtless of her own danger, she passed over—one instant, and she would have stood in safety on the farther side. One instant, a terrific crash of thunder reverberated far and wide—a knell of doom through all those deep-voiced caves—and the lightning dazzled Margaret's eyes. She staggered and missed her footing. Down, down she fell—oh! the lifetime of that second!—till the broken trunk of a tree, jutting out from the cruel precipice, caught her heavy riding-skirt, holding her back from that bridgeless chasm of eternity.

Suspended far above the abyss, a moment passed ere she could collect her scattered senses and realize her situation. The next, with quick presence of mind, she swung gently to and fro until she succeeded in placing her foot upon a crevice in the cliff below, and



then raised herself with difficulty to a half sitting, half crouching position upon the decaying trunk.

She knew she had but exchanged a swift death for one perchance but a short while deferred. For she could feel the tree vibrate beneath her weight, and heard at intervals, listening with suppressed breath, the plunge of loosened rocks and upturned trees, hurled by the wind down into the gulf below. She looked upward. She had not fallen twenty feet, yet a glance convinced her how worse than futile must be any attempt to gain that height, which offered no footing nor any shrub of strength sufficient to afford support.

Faster and faster swept the tempest. Thunder-peal after thunder-peal loomed from summit to defile, while vast floods of flame glared upon the angry heavens and the trembling earth, when the proud forests bowed, humbling themselves before the rage of the ruthless wind.

Margaret knew that to call for human aid would now be vain; but she prayed aloud in her anguish, raising to the frowning skies her burning, tearless eyes. She cried to heaven in old familiar prayers, and although at first her thoughts could not soar, and the repetition was almost mechanical, yet the well-remembered words soothed and sustained her, as strains of immortal music. Few the thoughts given to herself; for her whole soul went up to the mercy-seat in yearning petitions for the safety of those she loved. Sacred promises of comfort came at length to her soul in the vividness of reality. She heard them clearly breathed above the rolling of the thunder, the desperate wrestling of the wind, the sullen moaning of the distant lake. And she became calm. There, hovering

over an abyss of dread, liable to be swept with every passing gust to an appalling death, Margaret's face bore no trace of terror. Tranquil, a rapt expression in the uplifted eyes, the lips moving in prayer, she awaited her coming doom.

But she is now no longer alone upon the mountain. Leaning carelessly against the rock beyond the ravine where she had stood, is a man in peasant's hunting-dress of gray—the knees exposed, as is usual with those who are wont to scale far mountain-heights. A noble figure, tall and strongly built, a face handsome indeed, but chiefly characteristic of that strength which had set the mouth somewhat sternly, and darkened the brow during the more than thirty years which had apparently passed by. Watching the storm with kindling eyes, as one who gloried in its grandeur and for whom it possesses no terrors, he stands there; but springs forward, as, glancing down into the chasm, he beholds a crouching woman's form clinging to a shattered tree.

Hastily, as one too familiar with danger to heed it, he crosses upon the fallen tree. But even now, what rescue can he bring? Clearly, none, from that height. He walks back and forward once or twice, in search of some spot whence descent may be possible. At length one is found, not impracticable, though dangerous. He hesitates not an instant, however, but flings himself from tree to tree, from crag to crag, until he stands below Margaret upon a ledge narrow indeed, but offering a foothold to one whose nerve did not fail him. He looks up. A sudden tremor shakes him, and he is fain to grasp the trunk of a tree bending near, to steady himself.

A moment, and the serenity of her face reassured him. He called softly:

"Mademoiselle! Mademoiselle!"

It was as though the voice recalled her spirit to earth. She started and shuddered, looking down as he gently bade her in French:

"Have a care—do not bend forward so. Attend to what I say. Can you hear me?"

"Yes," was the faint reply.

He drew a coil of rope from the pocket of his jacket, hastily making knots in it a foot or two apart.

"It is strong, it will bear your weight," he called to her. "Secure it carefully, very carefully by this slip-knot, to the tree. Don't bend forward, Mademoiselle—you will lose your balance; keep perfectly still; trust me, I can throw it to you."

And knotting the rope around a stone, with true aim he threw it to her.

She fastened it to the tree, following his instructions. But it dangled in the air, far above, out of his reach.

She looked down with a face of blank dismay upon him standing there with brows contracted in thought.

"Would it be possible to remain where you are, until I seek and bring assistance?" he asked, after an instant's consideration.

"The trunk is loosened now," she answered hoarsely.

"There is but this one way, then. Mademoiselle, can you resolutely do as I bid you, knowing the risk? or will you await there a certain destruction?"

She grew even paler than before, yet her white lips did not tremble, as she replied firmly:

"I will obey you."

"Disengage your dress, then, carefully from the tree.

Now be prepared to move from your position, your arms about the tree. Then descend by the rope; the knots will give your hands some stay. Close your eyes when you have firm hold of the rope, lest you become dizzy. Move very gently and deliberately, lest a sudden shock loosen the tree. Do not look for a footing when you reach the end of the rope, but merely release your hold, and leave the rest to me. Remember, all depends upon no struggle, no effort to save yourself at the last."

He spoke very slowly and distinctly, to give her confidence by his own calmness. And it was in a tone steady as his own, that she asked presently:

"Are you ready?"

"Come—and God guard you!"

"God help us both!" And with closed eyes and moving lips she glided down the rope.

Passing his left arm closely round the tree, his right foot firmly planted forward, his right arm outstretched, he stands awaiting her. Pale he is, even to the compressed lips; but he follows her every movement with a gaze bearing him witness that no thought of his own danger has thus blanched his cheek and concentrated such fearful agony in his watchful eyes.

She is near now—almost within his grasp; but one struggle of hers—one misstep of his—may dash both into the gulf below.

She draws near—nearer—is at the end of the rope at last, after seconds that are hours to both. One moment she clings with desperate energy—then gently looses her hold.

She falls—into his arms, thank Heaven!

There is room for both upon the narrow ledge; but

a strong arm is passed around her, lest she lose her perilous foothold. She leans against him for a moment with drooping eyelids, dizzy and faint.

Her hand rested on his arm, and he felt now warm trickling drops upon his hand. It was blood, and when he raised her hand he saw it flowing freely from a deep gash in the wrist.

"What is this? You are hurt!" he said anxiously.

"It is nothing—I scarcely feel it—but—I did not think I was so childishly weak," she answered shivering, as with gentle touch he bound up the wound.

"Not weak—passing strong and brave indeed. But the greatest danger is past. Can you dare the rest? These cliffs are far more formidable in appearance than in reality they are," he said encouragingly.

"I think I can." She tried to steady her voice, withdrawing at the same time farther from his supporting arm.

He bent his head, looking in her face, where the varying color belied her words.

"No, Mademoiselle, you can not."

"There," she said, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "there, on that rock. I am not afraid to stay there; and you will come again—you will send assistance—very soon?"

"Hark!" he replied; "do you not hear the rocks and trees crashing momentarily around us? You must not wait for other assistance than mine. You must——"

She shook her head.

"No. You have already so nobly periled your life for mine, that you shall not risk it further."

He answered by passing his arm yet more firmly round her waist. Regardless of remonstrances, him-

self placed her hands upon his shoulder, and with the aid of his trusty Alpenstock, slowly and warily, by an ascent more circuitous and less hazardous than his descent had been, he regained the brink.

She seated herself upon a rock as he released her, standing near, his brow bared to the wind that tossed back the clustering waves of chestnut hair. In his face she, glancing up, assuredly recognized the strongly-marked, handsome features of her deliverer. But the keen, dark-blue eyes looking down with gaze intent almost to fierceness upon the dangers escaped, were how different from the eyes that in the midst of those dangers looked so gently into her own, bidding her fear not. And in the curves of the firm, finely-cut mouth as it settled in repose, was a cold scornfulness but slightly veiled by the drooping brown moustache.

Margaret hesitated to address him, but presently began softly:

"How shall I ever thank you?"

He turned. "By trusting me yet further. Mademoiselle, you are not safe even here, although more sheltered than below. The storm is not yet at its height, and will probably not have spent its strength till evening. Do you see those drifting clouds, black with heavy rain? Beyond the ravine we shall find shelter. Will you trust me to take you across that very primitive bridge? I assure you I have crossed it and recrossed it many times."

Margaret shuddered. "In crossing that, I fell. But I will go if it must be so."

"No absolute necessity," was the cold response.

"I will go," she said at once, her pride roused by the tone.

And rising, she would have attempted the crossing unassisted, but again he drew his arm around her.

He paused on gaining the other side, and looked down into the ravine.

"Look—the fate you have escaped," he said.

She followed his guiding eyes. The shattered tree, the frail support to which she had clung, shook and trembled with every blast, and loosened earth and stones fell from the upturned roots, dashing against the crags below. Presently a stronger gust—a heavier crash—and the tree was gone!

Margaret covered her face with her hands.

"And this I owe to you," she murmured.

"As much to your own calmness, your own courage. Had you feared, even faltered——"

His voice grew husky.

Margaret first broke the silence that ensued.

"And where is our refuge?" she inquired.

"That rock," and he pointed to the vast pile whence her startled eyes had first met the ravine. "On the further side we shall find the shelter of a cave."

One might almost have fancied this rock the structure of human toil, so like a fortress-tower it arose frowning over the chasm below. A narrow rugged ledge belted it, and this, holding by the wall above, Margaret's deliverer traversed, lifting her as easily as if she had been a child.

On the farther side, concealed from view of the way she had pursued, a hollow opened in the rock. More than this she saw not; for, overcome by the emotions and fatigue of the last two hours, and upborne no longer by the pressure of necessity, she sank only half

conscious upon the cloak he flung on the stone floor, to serve as a couch for her.

When the dizzy whirl passed away, and she could again collect her thoughts, she glanced round in search of her rescuer. He stood abstracted at the entrance through which now dashed the fast coming rain. A gloom so heavy darkened his brow that Margaret, watching, was touched, and said softly:

"See, Monsieur, how fast the rain is falling. I entreat you, do not stand there in the storm. Will you not come within?"

Hardly turning, and not looking at her as he spoke, he thanked her, but declined very decidedly, somewhat abruptly.

She flushed deeply, and, averting her eyes, examined for the first time her temporary abode.

The cave was of granite, loftily arched, and adorned with nature's careless sculpturing in the roof. And medieval art had here lent rude aid to nature; for on the rugged wall opposite the entrance was carved a massive cross, beneath it a sort of shelf, and in the wall beside Margaret a long narrow bench, all hewn in the solid rock. This had been the cell, doubtless, of some hoary anchorite whose name has passed from earth long ages since, but whose sign-manual of devotion remains a monument of the devotee while the everlasting mountains stand. Margaret gazed in awe. In imagination she saw the reverend bowed head and clasped hands before that shrine, and upon the rude shelf the death's head beside the illuminated missal.

But suddenly, as the wind swept by in wilder cadence, a deep fear smote upon her, and burying her face in her hands her whole frame shook with sup-



pressed sobs. Every thunder-roll, every lightning-flash flaring through the gloom upon the walls around, every blast, and crash of tottering crag or uprooted timber, thrilled her very soul as she thought of her father, of Alice, and that other whom in her heart she called always her old friend. Until despair seized her, and she would have rushed out into the tempest, seeking them, had not that quiet figure stood there fixed as fate, closing, she well knew, all exit.

Time passed, but Margaret moved not; only the quivering of her frame showed her living and suffering. Her head, drooping upon one arm, rested on the bench, while the right hand, clenched to repress fast-coming sobs, pressed convulsively the cold stone.

Meantime her companion had stood gazing fixedly out. Now he turned, casting a glance upon her. For the first time he beheld her agitation. His face softened, he moved away from the opening and approached her. On her ear, straining after beloved voices, listening in all-engrossing eagerness for every gust, his step fell unheeded and he watched her unobserved. He was deeply moved. Involuntarily he laid his hand upon the little one resting on the bench.

"Are you afraid?" he asked tenderly. "Do not weep thus, my poor child."

She raised her head and fixed her eyes wildly upon him.

"My father," she gasped. "Alice, Harry, they too are on the mountain."

"They are safe. Be comforted. I met them descending as the storm arose. They followed the valley road."

In her agitation she had used her native language,

and he replied in the same, dropping the French from thenceforward.

"And I came in the opposite direction," she cried, radiant with joy.

Now for the first time she felt his clasping hand. Hers fluttered an instant, and was released.

"But Luise, my maid," she faltered presently.

"Where was she?"

"We rode hither together, hoping to find our party; and while she left me on an errand, I strolled off and lost my way."

"She is Swiss?"

"Yes," and she looked inquiringly at her interrogator.

"Do not alarm yourself, then," he rejoined, "these mountaineers are familiar with every change of the weather. Beyond doubt she is safely housed long ere this."

"But she knew I was alone on the mountain. She would return to seek me," replied Margaret, only half convinced.

He smiled sarcastically. "Have you then so much faith in human nature?" he asked.

"Have not you?"

"I have none."

"Yet," she returned quickly, "you risked your life for a stranger. Do not measure mankind by a lower standard than yourself. Many must fall far short of it, but some——"

"Do not misunderstand me, Mademoiselle. It is because I do so measure human nature, that I distrust it. As for what you perhaps consider the merit of risking my life, it may be that had life for me one single charm, I might have hesitated."

Margaret was silent. The bitter melancholy of his tone and the despair of the life thus revealed to her, struck a chill to her heart.

A long silence ere he spoke again.

"Might I ask you a question, Mademoiselle, without seeming impertinent?"

"You would ask nothing impertinent," she replied simply.

"Will you tell me what you were saying to yourself as I came so gallantly to the rescue? Nay," observing that she colored painfully, and dropping the light tone in which he had before spoken, "my question is not indeed prompted by idle curiosity. On the very verge of a fearful death—but a breath of the tempest between you and eternity—you were calm as now, and almost a smile upon your lips. And life must be sweet to you."

With reverently bowed head and flushing cheek she repeated:

"'Whoso dwelleth under the defense of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'"

"Who is worthy to feel that assurance?" after a pause he said.

"None are *worthy*. '*His* faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler.'"

"Ay, but to whom is the promise?" he asked earnestly.

Her head still bent, and the color mounting to her brow, she answered:

"To those who say, 'In Him will I trust.'"

He made no reply, and Margaret, deep in the thoughts which his words had awakened, drooped her forehead on her hand, shading her face. He re-

mained there still, looking down steadfastly upon her, until, rousing himself at last, with an impatient gesture, he said, looking at his watch:

"Four o'clock! Mademoiselle, are you not hungry?"

"Indeed I am. But appetites are superfluous to storm-staid pilgrims in a deserted hermitage."

"Shall we make an inroad on the hermit's larder?"

"Hermit's larder! Are not the two ideas incompatible?"

"Surely, Mademoiselle, you would not condemn the unfortunate to a winter fare of snow-flakes and icicles? Berries are not to be plucked all the year."

"Ah! true. Then you think there is a larder? But where?"

He pointed out an opening in the rock at a sharp angle which she had not observed.

They traversed a straightened passage widening by degrees into another cave, smaller and less perfect than the first, inasmuch as here and there the walls gaped in great rents, through which trees and shrubs manifold intruded. Nor impervious to the weather, for the rocky roofing did not extend over the entire space. A shelf was carved here also in the wall, but its contents manifestly did not belong to antiquity. A rifle, belt, and powder-flask, a venison ham, a tin canister, a silver drinking-cup, and a clasp-knife.

"What have we here? Venison, instead of lentils and cresses—and actually—yes, actually—ground coffee!" Margaret exclaimed as she lifted the top from the canister, pouring a few grains into her hand. "And a rifle and powder too! Methinks, Monsieur, we have penetrated into the cell of the jolly Friar Tuck."

"Have you scruples of conscience regarding the venison?"

"Not I. I am far too hungry for that. But only think what a valuable discovery we have made. The style of carving in both caverns certainly belongs to the thirteenth century, and yet here we find both gun and powder; ergo, in the thirteenth century hermits were much given to the chase, and wont to hunt with the rifle. I foresee the complimentary greetings of all learned antiquaries," she said gayly.

"You have overlooked another noteworthy and to us just now very valuable fact, Mademoiselle. You perceive that in the middle ages the art of curing hams was carried to such perfection that they could be preserved in fact during several centuries."

"Assuredly. Meanwhile, before becoming distinguished let us dine. If you will bring the wood, I'll make the fire, and we shall have broiled venison and delicious coffee."

There was a quantity of brushwood and dry branches about the cave. These he brought, and building them up in the requisite form, gave Margaret the tinder-box, and stood by, watching as she struck match after match, and applied herself to blowing the struggling flame.

And indeed it was a picture worth the watching as she knelt there with so much unaffected grace. Her hat had been laid aside, and her hair, from which, in her fall, she had lost the comb that confined it, swept in massive waves upon the ground as she stooped, intent upon her self-imposed task, rounding her full red lips into the semblance of an opening rosebud, in the effort to ignite the refractory fire.

At length she raised her head, and caught the amused smile with which her companion regarded her.

She rose immediately, and, half laughing, half vexed, turned to him her flushed face.

"Are you not ashamed," she cried, out of breath, "to stand there laughing at me instead of proving that you can do better? Come, or you shall have no dinner."

"Pardon me," was the rejoinder. "So absorbed was I in looking at you in your novel employment, that I quite forgot my duty."

A few judicious arrangements of the fuel by him, and the whole burst forth into a bright blaze.

"What can you not do, from the rescuing of forlorn damsels to the making of obstinate fires?" exclaimed Margaret, standing by, lost in wonder.

"Very many things," he responded, between jest and earnest.

"Par exemple?"

"The making of the delicious coffee you so rashly promised. Can you, Mademoiselle?"

"Of course, what is easier? If you will but fill this canister with water, we shall soon have it boiling, and then we can draw the coffee presently."

"I believe you know something of tea," he said with a smile; "but I would advise you to leave the coffee to me."

She laughed. "Is mine an original recipe? Then I have no objections to act under your directions."

And under his instructions she progressed, until the repast was served upon a broad tabular rock.

"On a servi, Monsieur," she said, standing with

folded hands and dropping an antiquated courtesy.  
"But where are the hermit's plates?"

"These are his summer service," and he gathered a handful of the large leaves that had forced themselves through a crevice in the cave.

"Forks were a luxury introduced at a later period, were they not?"

"They were, but knives answered every purpose," he replied, giving her a delicate penknife and reserving the antiquarian clasp-knife.

"And the coffee-cup has double duty to perform."

"It is very capacious, as you see, so that, if you prefer, we can as a preliminary at once divide the 'delicious coffee,' I retaining the lion's share with the canister."

"I think," said Margaret, gazing thoughtfully down into the coffee-grounds at the bottom of her now almost exhausted cup, "I think playing the hermit so delightful that I believe I should like to be one in very truth. Would not you?"

"I am not sure. Do you think a fairy queen would come every day to put out the fires, draw the coffee, and brighten the dark cavern with her smile?"

"I am afraid not; fairies are ever wayward," she answered gayly. "Yet if you offer such inducements! I know not if venison be fairy food, but I am confident Titania herself would not scorn this."

The sumptuous banquet at length brought to a conclusion, Margaret replaced upon the shelf every relic of antiquity. As she did so, the device upon the silver drinking-cup caught her attention. It was a lonely tower wrought in relief, and upon the parapet

a single fragile flower. Beneath, were the initials E. I. Z.

"A beautiful crest," she remarked, "and one that seems to speak of lordly strength opposed to foes, and protection offered to clinging friends."

"It would bear yet another interpretation, Mademoiselle. It would signify the one fair and lowly flower blossoming in a gloomy prison-life. As such it was chosen by the son of a peasant-girl."

Margaret glanced up in surprise. She had long since recognized Alice's Count. Yet his words would seem to declare an humble lineage. But she put down the cup without further comment.

As they reëntered the outer cave, he said :

"It is well your accident occurred near here. To be unsheltered in this tempest would have been most dangerous. I myself have frequently been obliged to take refuge here, and several times have been imprisoned for more than twenty-four hours. Therefore I thought of stocking the Hermit's larder, after a fashion."

"Oh!" she cried, "by all that is romantic, do not banish the dark ages by throwing into the cave the sudden glare of the present."

"By all means then exclude it. We will remain antiquarians," he rejoined.

Meanwhile the storm had spent its fury, and nothing was heard save a distant moaning like wails from stricken hearths after the raging of a mortal battle.

The shades of evening were falling duskily, occasional gusts swept over the lake, warning that the tempest was not yet quite past, when Margaret and the Count gained the road after descending the moun-



tain at almost the same point whence she had that morning ascended.

Margaret, overworn with fatigue, threw herself upon the fallen tree by the wayside.

"I can never hope to repay all this day's debt of kindness," she said, "and yet I must ask of you something more. Luise, I may not leave her."

"I will gladly do all you wish. But you must allow me first to care for you. You must be aware that it is quite impossible you should reach Lowerz to-night. If you would accept shelter beneath my roof, I have an old housekeeper who would take excellent care of you. There is no other house near, where you could remain with any comfort, and I will dispatch a messenger instantly for your father."

She hesitated. "I think Luise and I could ride home if you—if you would send some one with us."

"Pardon me, I am sure you can not. Your very voice trembles. And here is a pulse," touching for an instant her slender wrist, "that needs but little more fatigue and exposure to beat high in fever. And see how densely the clouds are gathering again. Mademoiselle, 'twere as well I had left you to this morning's danger if you will not yield to me in this."

She looked somewhat troubled, but consented.

"As you will," she said, "if only you first find Luise. It was to yonder cottage that she went this morning."

"But I can not leave you here. You must first——"

"No, no," she cried impatiently, "I will not. I will not move until she comes. Go, pray go. I am not afraid."

At that moment a loud clear shout resounded through the defiles.

"It is—it must be—Luise!" Margaret cried.

And Luise it was. Guided by the Count's answering shouts, she soon appeared, followed by several men.

A few words explained her movements. After unsuccessful inquiries concerning the missing party, she had retraced her steps to warn Margaret of the approaching danger. She had wandered in search of her, until, remembering her own helplessness without a guide, and alarmed for her mistress by the increasing violence of the storm, she hastened to return to the cottage, there to obtain aid more efficient. The promise of this she without difficulty obtained, but was almost forcibly detained until there was comparative safety in the ascent of the mountain.

Margaret gave the Count a triumphant smile. Then telling her plans to Luise, whom she had some trouble to persuade out of her fears of the haunted castle, she bade her, giving her at the same time her purse, direct the men to the spot where the horses had been secured.

The girl made some reply in a low voice. As she ended, Margaret turned again to the Count.

"My horse was killed in the storm," she said, her lip quivering.

"Mine is near, at your service."

And turning to the men, he sent one in search of the animal, and directed another to his stables, whence he was to ride post-haste to—

"Your address, Mademoiselle? Or, stay, it would be much better were you to write a line."

She remembered her sketch-book which she had

slipped in her pocket before setting forth on that adventurous ramble. And drawing it forth, she hastily tore out a leaf, and scribbled a few lines by the waning light.

"My father is, I know, scouring the country toward Schwyz in search of me. I rode thither this morning, and he knows nothing of my attempt to join him," she said, as she directed and gave the note to the Count.

He borrowed her pencil, and added some words upon the back before hurrying the messenger away.

Margaret averted her head, shading her face, but the Count standing beside her, presently saw the tears streaming fast through her slender fingers. After a moment he spoke:

"Was the horse a favorite of yours?" he asked.

"My dear old Glamis! I brought him from my home in Scotland; and to die thus—crushed by the falling of a tree——"

"I heard the peculiar, wild death-cry of a horse almost immediately after our entrance into the cave. I feared then, it might be my own."

She raised to him her eyes, in which tears yet glistened.

"I am glad it was not yours," she said softly.

She thought him almost rude as he moved abruptly from her side to the road, where he remained, pacing up and down, until the horses arrived.

Even then he allowed Luise's companion, who was no other than the morning's acquaintance, Fritz, to assist Margaret in mounting, but came forward as she was seated in the saddle, and laid his hand upon the arched neck of the restive horse that, rubbing his

head in loving recognition against his master's arm, walked now quietly beside him.

Arrived at the Castle, the Count, calling Luise to follow, gave Margaret his arm through the dim cloisters, and up a winding flight of massive stone stairs in the east tower, where, on the first landing, a door stood hospitably open.

As Margaret's eyes recovered from the sudden blaze of light, she looked around in astonishment. The apartment, spacious and lofty, was fitted up most luxuriously. Upon the threshold, one parted with every vestige of the ancient ruin, entering into a Parisian boudoir. All was modern here, excepting only the carved Gothic roof of oak and the deep embrasured windows, shaded however, by rose-colored silk and lace. Choice paintings hung upon the walls, books and music were there in profusion.

Observing Margaret's surprise, her host explained: "I once imagined my sister would call this her home. These apartments were prepared for her. Zozia!"—to an old woman who made her appearance in the doorway of the adjoining chamber—"this is the lady for whom I sent you word to prepare. See that you show her every attention. Miss Ross, I shall presently send you medicine in the shape of a substantial supper, and allow me to recommend a glass of wine. Your father can not fail to be here very soon; he will occupy the room above. Good-night!"

Margaret returned his bow—then, with a sudden impulse, extended her hand.

"You must let me thank you after the manner of my country," she said.

He held her hand, looking down into the uplifted eyes. In their clear, calm depths was no wavering, no shrinking from, no consciousness of, the fire kindling in his. He was paler as he turned away.

Old Zozia followed him with a steady gaze until the door closed, and then, darting a glance of mingled fear and hate upon Margaret, muttered some words in her native Polish tongue.

She could speak German, however, and soon addressed herself to the comfort of both mistress and maid.

An hour later, and Margaret slumbers peacefully beneath the roof of the Haunted Castle, her father's kiss sealing her lips, and his deep joy over the lost that is found gladdening her dreams.

What though a troubled spirit wander in restless vigil amid driving wind and heavily-falling rain, beneath her darkened windows?

What though a shriveled face with baleful eyes look down upon the wanderer beneath, and then across at those windows, while shrunken lips mutter in wrathful maledictions upon "the frank-browed syren who has robbed her of her boy."

Still, she sleeps on.

#### IV.

"THE day is cold and dark and dreary ;  
It rains, and the wind is never weary ;  
The vine still clings to the mouldering wall,  
And at every blast the dead leaves fall—  
And the day is dark and dreary."

A DISMAL, drizzling morning, prophetic of a long, dull, changeless day.

Margaret, in the hospitably embracing arms of an easy-chair, is listlessly turning over the leaves of a familiar volume by her old favorite Jean Paul. She is possessed by a restless spirit ; has tried half a dozen bars of half a dozen pieces upon the full-toned grand piano ; ranged through as many pages of light French German or English literature, with a feeling that they, or her mind, were dismally befogged through those level drifting clouds gathering without. Her sketch-book lies beside her, open at a hasty drawing of the Hermit's Cave, and she glances at it with a half smile, sighing at the same time, partly in remembrance of anguish whose wound was yet too fresh to bear the touch ; partly perhaps for that romance which now seemed broken off and unlinked with every day life. She began to wonder whether there was reality in the scenes of yesterday ; and as if to con-

vince herself, she described the cave to Luise, asking if she had ever heard of it.

Luise was sitting at the window with that inseparable knitting-work, yawning over the prospect for the day, and envying Mr. Ross, who had just ridden by on his way to Lowerz. Only on a morning visit, however; for, yielding to his host's urgent hospitality and the warning given Margaret by the clouds, he had consented to extend the visit to the Castle until the morrow, merely riding over to relieve the anxious ones at home. He was also the bearer of condolences to Alice, on the misfortune of not having fallen down a precipice into the arms of an unknown hero, nor having been stormstaid and benighted, mounted on the incomparable black steed, and thus winning her wager.

As Margaret spoke, the girl turned quickly, crossing herself with a look of horrified surprise.

"Surely, gracious Fräulein, you have not been in that cave? What, and in the storm too?" as her mistress nodded. "The holy saints defend us!"

"From what, Luise? Let us have the whole story, for story there must be," Margaret said, her curiosity immediately awakened by the mysterious words and evident alarm.

Luise, her face still expressive of horror, yet folding her hands over her knitting with the conscious air of an oracle, began:

"It is an old story, my young lady, which my grandmother—she was born and lived here in Zug, until she married and went away to Glarus—would tell over to us children in the long winter evenings, while we would sometimes, I warrant you, creep close

enough to her knees as the wind afar among the pines on the mountains beyond the lake, seemed to shriek, trying to drown her words, though the untrodden snow kept all quiet about the door. But then we threw on pine knots that made a roaring blaze, while Franz sat in the chimney-corner mending his nets for the early fishing, and grandmother went on, Sänchen and I taking turns at the old spinning-wheel. Ours was the fairest linen in all the country round, Miss, the neighbors used to say; and next month, when Sänchen is married—— But thinking on grandmother and the little cottage makes me forget my story. I wish you could hear her tell it; but here it is, as well as I remember.

“In the old, old time—even my grandmother does not know how many hundred years ago—this very castle was a monastery, and the fame of it went abroad far and wide, for its holy brethren, and for the miracles they performed and the good works they wrought. Now there dwelt hard by, in the recesses of the mountains, a mighty baron, on whose ripening acres the sun rose first and set the latest, whose jewels and whose old wines gleamed the brightest, whose castle walls stood strongest, whose retainers rode the swiftest, whose blows fell heaviest, and whom all the people feared. And they followed at his call as his hounds followed, when he dashed across their fairest fields, trampling down the headed grain, just like the knight in your song yesterday, Fräulein. Or like the hunted chamois they fled before him in his wrath. And they hid in darksome caverns, as those who fear the light, or—well, they say he was a generous master to the ravening eagles on these heights.



However that may be, he ruled, and if he looked darkly at the clouds, all the peasants carried their umbrellas.

"All? No, there was one who feared him not.

"Down in the valley beneath the grim old castle, dwelt the fairest maid in all the canton. The sunbeams were not brighter nor more frequent than her smile, and the falling snow not fairer than her brow and heart. All the people loved her, and she knew no other name than the sunshine of Egeri. It was on a fair spring evening, just as the sun dipped down behind the mountains, that she stood beside the brook in the little glen where her mother's cottage hid among the trees, and heard on a sudden the clattering of many hoofs behind her. She had been rinsing a basket of linen in the running stream, and as she rose, tossing in the last piece, with the flush of the sunset on her cheek, and the water trickling from her white upraised arms, as she twined together the great waves of golden hair that had rolled down to her knee, singing low to herself the while—she looked, grandmother used to say, like the lovely Lurlei maids who chant such sweet strains from the moonlit waves, that the boatman who listens hears no more voice of conscience or of earth. Only this was a good maiden, for all that.

"Well, on came the clatter of the hoofs—ringing armor, waving plumes, a goodly cavalcade, and the bold baron at the head. On they dashed; but the baron suddenly checked his horse. He had espied her, still as if rooted on the rock, gazing after them in innocent admiration and yet fear. For ever before, when the drawbridge of the great castle dropped for

the baron to ride forth, the aged mother would summon her in hastily to spinning-wheel or broidery-frame, saying, 'Get thee in, child. Yon steel gleams bravely in the sunlight, but it pierces dark and cold in the peasant's heart.'

"And how came the maiden out that evening?" questioned Margaret, as Luise stopped for breath.

"That I can not tell," she replied perplexedly, "unless the dame might have gone away to vespers, for she was a good old soul. Nun! stock-still stopped the baron, and fixed his bold eyes upon the maiden.

"'Ha?' he cried, 'a rare wild-flower, by all that's fair! Halloo, knights one and all—the fullest beaker to-night, and the swiftest horse in my stables on the morrow, to him who gathers me yon May-bloom.'

"At the word there is a rush of steeds, and before the terrified Mädchen can turn to fly, one of the retainers has caught her from the ground at one rushing swoop, and relinquished her, half senseless, to his master, who held her before him on the saddle.

"Only one wild cry she gave, and then it seemed voice failed her. Hope of rescue was there none; she was alone; and moreover who would dare gainsay the noble baron?

"An abrupt turn of the road—in another moment the drawbridge must be crossed. When out into the road, his grasp upon the baron's bridle, springs a young peasant.

"There is a glitter of steel as he raises his right arm, a fiendish glitter in the baron's eyes as, quick as thought, ere the swift blow descends, he flings the maiden between, while the cry of glad surprise is yet upon her lips.

"The swift blow descends, through and through her heart; the life-blood spouts warm on her deliverer's hand.

"One instant he gazed on it steadfastly, muttering, 'Better—better even thus,' when a dozen blows are aimed at him, and he turns, springing from crag to crag, swift and sure-footed as the chamois."

"And took refuge in that cave?" Margaret asked eagerly, in the pause.

"The saints forbid! But in the monastery. And the baron, bold and impious that he was, dared to demand him of the holy brotherhood, threatening to drag him from the very altar's foot if they refused. But you may be sure refuse they did.

"Now there was there another peasant, a dark, ill-looking fellow enough, whom nobody liked, and the maiden least of all, so that she had given him the basket for the poor brave lad who spilled her blood. He, some say, went by night to the baron, and bargained with him to deliver the monastery into his hands. For it was well known throughout the land that no weapon raised against those walls might avail aught. And all the brethren were gathered together in a strong tower apart, from which a secret passage led into the chapel, far beneath the ground, so that no enemy could approach them any way.

"One cold stormy night—months had gone by, and midwinter was then come, bleaker and more tempestuous than ever before known in all this mountain-land—the holy brotherhood were all at their prayers in the chapel, when, just as the great bell is on the stroke of twelve—for it is a midnight mass—and the wind suddenly rising sweeps round the walls shrieking and

sobbing like a doomed soul—klop! klop!—here comes a knocking at the inner gate. Now you must know, that ever since the insolent threats of the mighty baron, the outer gates were always kept fast locked and double-locked, and one would think only Satan himself could whisk through the key-hole or the crevices, even were any bold enough to venture forth on such a night as this. So you may imagine how the reverend brethren one and all scrambled in haste to their legs, and even the father abbot himself, though he stood his ground at first, stumbled over the Latin in his book. And how all of them, from sacristan to father abbot, made the best of their way to the gate, though when there they stopped, debating whether to open it, some advising to exorcise the Evil One from the sacred ground. Until through a lull in the storm came again that knocking, and a feeble voice beseeching shelter in the name of the blessed saints. Upon which the abbot, who was a good man and a charitable, caused to open to the stranger.

“It was an aged man apparently, who stood leaning there upon his pilgrim’s staff. For his beard crept down long and grizzly to his hempen girdle, and his back was bowed and bent. Yet was a strange, wild fierceness in the glance he cast around, as he followed through the chapel, and his eyes fell upon the poor dying lad who alone of all remained undisturbed on his knees amid all this confusion. And his muttered benedicite had in its sound somewhat of a malediction. But he had a wonderful story of a vision and a dream; how in his deep slumber he was upborne by a mighty wind and carried from many a long league away, being set down right here at the inner gate, to

warn the worthy abbot and the brotherhood, whose fame was noised so far, of a coming danger and a coming foe." So when the morrow's sun glittered on the spears and lances and the steel trappings of the baron's warlike hosts, the simple-minded brethren paid reverence to the stranger almost before their good old abbot himself.

"The monastery was now besieged; and, taken so at unawares, provisions soon were running short. But the pilgrim friar dreamed yet another dream, and on the morrow told unto the brethren how it was revealed to him, that, beneath a certain buttress beside the outer wall, might be found that coming night stores to live upon in plenty for yet another week. So they hearkened to his words, leading him forth and back through the subterranean passage. And many another dream he dreamed, all thus fulfilled within the time appointed, until he was honored more and more, and fully intrusted with the keys and all the secret of the passage.

"And then—ach! liebes Fräulein, it is a cruel, cruel story.

"Another dark and stormy night. Not one ray of light through the pitchy midnight, and the wind howling, yet always louder and louder, so that naught else may be heard save the muttered prayers of the holy brothers as they cross themselves, listening to the storm, or from time to time feeling for each other with awe-struck voices in the dense darkness. For all within the strong tower were they gathered, and the fuel was all spent at last, and, ganz gewiss, the dreaming friar must have a dream once again, and is gone out into the murky tempest, bidding the brethren

ren be of good cheer, for he will return anon, and then it will be many a long night ere they want for food and flame. The darkness hid his strange smile as he said these words, and the great doors clanged behind him with a hollow echo.

"An hour is gone, and the dark and the cold weigh heavier and heavier, until the warmth of prayer itself is chilled and a dull foreboding glooms on all as they kneel there apart or gather closer, grasping each other by the hand. Suddenly, slowly, faint and hollow as distant smothered moans, tolls the chapel-bell, rung by no brother's hands, the solemn midnight-hour. And now mingling, now surging shrill above it, the wind, shrieking a wild unearthly shriek, shakes the tower to the very foundations. And now another sound, of trampling feet—a sharp loud crash, and knacks! grind the iron doors back upon their hinges.

"A glare of torchlight and of steel. Foremost in that armed band, entering, dashing back even the bold baron in his bloody rage and haste, is the dreaming friar, now no longer bowed and gray-bearded. At one stride he has crossed the stone pavement, already slippery with blood, to where before a cross apart—a tiny cross of rubies red and pure as maiden's blood—the blood that spirted on his hand from her pure heart, and would not thence into the dust—a fair-haired youth is kneeling with clasped hands. Once and twice he plunged his dagger in the quiet heart. The youth moves not, nor falls. And the torchlight flickers on the still, rapt smile of those wan lips. One yell of baffled rage, and the dark one turned, crushing beneath his heel the dead and dying as he sought

the narrow passage and plunged out into the storm. Death had cheated him of his victim."

Luise paused, and Margaret drew a long breath,

"And what then, Luise? Is that all?" she asked, looking for poetical justice of some degree.

"Leider, dear young lady, that was all of the holy brotherhood. But the false one, the traitor, he avenged them. For with him vanished for the baron and his band all hope of escape from the grim tower, for they knew not the secret of the passage. And there they were, shut up forever with the murdered, and there their bones bleached side by side, and the shining casque was as brave a banquet-hall for the death-worm as the monk's cowl."

Margaret shuddered.

"But," she said presently, "all this has nothing to do with my cave. I thought your story had some connection with that."

"And so it has, dear Fräulein. You shall hear. For when the false one fled, and not alone—for remorse and fear followed fast behind—where should he take refuge but in this cavern which God had so cut off from man. There he carved out a cross in the hard, cold rock—and who knows but remorse with its sharp knife might have left the impress of the cross in that hard, cold heart of his? Be that as it may, however, the years went by, and each as it went laid a heavy hand upon the desolate towers of the monastery, until year by year they crumbled and fell. The years went by, and each as it went laid a heavy hand upon the desolator of those towers, until his brow was graven deep with their recording, his black hair white beneath the burden of their condemnation.

Bowed ever—for he lay before his crucifix night and day.

“Now there was among the followers of the bold baron a coward loon, who that fell night crouched without the gates, waiting in fear and trembling till the blows should all be spent—till the hour for plunder should be come. And back he slunk to his den amid the mountains, in greater fear than ever before, as the solemn monastery bell tolled forth that midnight knell for the unshriven buried alive within the holy precincts.

“Wohlan! Years had passed, as I said, and the false friar all the time dwelt as true hermit and holy in solitude unbroken. Until one night, just twenty years after that dread night, when the storm howled without, and the wind shrieked at the entrance of the cave, suddenly arose another and a wilder shriek, and the very storm reëchoed it above the thunder. Then rose the hoary hermit from his knees and hastened out into the night, following the direction of the cry. The lightning pointed out his pathway, and there, at his feet, where the precipice yawned so fearful—there, clinging to a rock far down its side, and in momentarily danger of falling—was a man in huntsman’s garb.

“Gracious lady, the holy saints must have helped him, or he never could have rescued him in such a tempest, leading him in safety to the cavern. Or, some say it was the devil in the huntsman’s garb—for I think the devil gets into it sometimes, especially in a season when game is scarce, and the hunting is restricted; however that be, on that same midnight the old chapel-bell, which had long lain rusted among the ruins, and at last had disappeared, no one knew



where, tolled forth a long deep knell that was heard far and wide; and as the startled peasants came to their doors to listen, a wild prolonged shriek chimed in the distance. It was the devil who, on that dread anniversary, attempted to carry off the anchorite; and that cry was his as the holy man laid the cross upon his brow, where every ruby burned like coals of fire, while the angels came and bore the hermit away in their arms. Some say it was the hermit's yell, when the man he had saved grappled with him in the entrance to the cave, the very man who slunk away from the monastery that night twenty years ago, and who now, dazzled by the blaze of that ruby cross, thought to wrest it from the bowed man standing unawares at the entrance, to hurl him at one blow down into the gulf below, and to find concealed in the cave the whole rich plunder of the monastery. But certain it is, that the Evil One had somewhat to do with the matter, for no trace of the bodies was ever found. And ever since every one, and huntsmen in especial, avoid that cave. A spell rests on it. When two are met within, and one bears the symbol of the holy cross, he obtains mastery over the other for life and death. But woe betide him if he ever lose that cross or yield it! Then is he in the power of the foul fiend who, on that night, was dismayed by the cross alone, and——”

“But,” Margaret interrupted, as with a half smile she drew back her sleeve and with it the embroidered kerchief binding the red wound upon her white arm, “but, Luise, surely it is not so very dreadful a catastrophe to gain power over any one, that your huntsmen should avoid the cave on that account. Me-

thinks many would venture it upon the marriage-day, like a visit to our well of St. Keyne."

"I don't know, Fräulein, any thing about the well of St. Keyne," responded Luise, looking up aghast at her mistress's light tone, "but this I do know, that not even to rule the goodman would I be mad enough to even so much as peep within that cave. For he who gains the power, surrenders happiness in exchange for it, and there is fierce enmity between the two. And the devil tries and tries unceasingly to tempt away the cross, that the power may belong to himself. Moreover, because the huntsman's dress did not effectually conceal his cloven hoof, the devil has all the more sworn vengeance against all huntsmen in that cave, so that none dare venture there; for even with the cross, they can not be secure against the devil's arts to wile it from them. And then all the sights and sounds of the devil's raising—one must hear all these for evermore. Ach, mein Fräulein! it must be fearful!" and with an unaffected shudder she turned again to her work.

Margaret had caught somewhat of the superstitious infection, and smiled at her sudden start as a quick tap sounded at the door. Blushed too, and hastily fastened the cuff around her wrist, as Luise admitted Count Zalkiewski.

Followed the usual inquiries, and somewhat anxious ones concerning her wounded arm, to all which—

"Oh! suffering only from the far niente this morning," she replied, with a smile, suppressing a slight yawn.

"Yet it would seem you have been busy too," and he glanced at the sketch-book which she removed from a chair to make room for him.

"May I not see?" he asked, detaining her hand.

She gave him the book. Then bending toward him, turned over the leaves one by one. Here was the unfinished view taken the preceding day, of the Egeri See, distant castle, and surrounding mountains. Farther on, many a wild scene, a portrait, or the careful copy of a masterpiece in painting or sculpture. Some hastily executed, others finished with the utmost care—all stamped with the touch and feeling of the true artist.

He staid her at one page.

"You have seen that?" she inquired.

"The Glacier of the Rhone! How often have I beheld the glow of sunlight on it as you have it here."

"Do you remember," she asked, "Longfellow's description—how he compares it to a gauntlet of ice thrown down by Winter, the mountain-king, in defiance of the sun, who vainly strives to raise it with his glittering spear?"

He smiled, though not scoffingly, at the genuine enthusiasm in the bright glance of those violet eyes upraised to his. Somewhat pityingly, though, as the thought crossed him that longer intercourse with the world—a little longer—and she would learn how effectively art can copy nature, and how easily eyes are raised or lowered, glitter or grow dim, to the stereotyped degree of frankness or modesty, brightness or mistiness. It was so long since he had seen untutored enthusiasm in French stays, that the watching rather amused and interested.

"Confess," he said, "was not Hyperion your guide-book thither?"

She colored and hesitated, for his tone betrayed his

thought; but glancing up shyly into his quietly observant face, replied:

"I did indeed follow Paul Flemming into Interlachen, and traced his footsteps to the great Glacier of the Grindelwald, the Schreckenhorn, and the Jungfrau, and above all sat in the green vale of Lauterbrunnen upon the very same mossy bank whence his Mary Ashburton must have sketched the ruins of Unspunnen."

"Those ruins then frowned down upon another Mary Ashburton—and the magician?"

She blushed a quick, guilty blush, remembering that as Harry stood beside her there, Mary's response had flashed through her mind: "You are not the magician." True, the offending thought had been immediately and self-reproachfully banished—for did she not love Harry very, very dearly?

She turned quickly over the leaves to the first page.

"My home," she said.

A rugged coast, where billows dashed against precipitous cliffs that, stretching far out into the sea, formed a safe harbor for the less turbulent waters, where lightly skimmed two or three fishing-boats, like white-winged sea-birds. Above the crags, grassy slopes, shaded by clumps of grand old trees, rolled away in natural terraces to the foot of a castle. Heavy, moss-grown turrets and feudal battlements were there, and, as though taken under their protecting wing, a modern mansion, with lofty porticoes, stood modestly a little back. In the distance, a village half hidden in the foliage, the church spire with its cross rising clear against the sky. In the background, darkly wooded and rocky mountain ranges.

"And where is this?" the Count asked, after expressing due admiration.

"In the Highlands of Scotland—Ross-shire. Dear old Balblair! it is the first time I ever left my home, and even amid all this novelty and pleasure, I feel sometimes a pang of what you Germans call Heimweh."

"*The* Germans, Mademoiselle. I am a Pole, and am of course entitled to neither home nor Heimweh," he responded, somewhat bitterly.

"You must have been a great wanderer," and she glanced up at him compassionately; "and in all your wanderings, have you never been in England? You speak our language with almost no foreign accent."

"I have, and in your Scotland also. I once spent a winter in Edinburgh."

"In Edinburgh! Is it possible?" And she paused in her careless toying with the leaves of her book as she lounged back in the great easy-chair, and sat eagerly upright. "Then perhaps you may know my sister who resides there—she married a Campbell."

"I knew several of that name," he replied, interested; "let me see—there was Archie, George, Donald——"

"Donald! Then you do know him?"

"Both your sister and her husband. Moreover, advanced quite to the friendly-dinner degree of intimacy," he rejoined, gratified by her frank gratification.

"I am, I can not tell you how glad"—and she smiled most brightly. "Our Jeanie's friends are all ours, and you must let us claim you on that score—as you will not for yesterday's—'act of common humanity'"—she quoted archly.

"Where is your sister?" was the question, put abruptly, as if to change the subject.

"My adventurous sister is far, far away, upon a journey rather unusual for a lady. She has been for the last four or five months in Syria with her husband, who is engaged there upon some explorations connected with one of our Edinburgh learned societies. It just suits Jeanie, you know—the roving life, the novelty, and the spice of romance and shade of danger among all those wild tribes. I am not sure that I should not like it myself, although Jeanie laughs at me for being so much more staid than she, who is ten years older. I only hope she and Donald will prove as successful antiquaries as you and I were yesterday. But when were you in Edinburgh?"

"In—yes, in '36—ten years ago. Your sister was then a bride, very young, very beautiful. You do not resemble each other."

Margaret laughed gayly at this reverse of a compliment.

"We are to meet at Baden in a few weeks," she said, "and I shall tell her of our romantic introduction, though, by the way—for do you know you have not yet told me your name?"

"Pardon me," was the rejoinder, "but the circumstances of our meeting rendered an introduction rather superfluous at first—afterward, I forgot. As it was not my intention, however, to remain incognito, I wrote my name to your father. And now I am Ernst Ivar Zalkiewski, very much at your service."

He turned again to the sketch-book, which opened at the Hermit's Cave.

"Ha! our refuge of yesterday," he remarked.

"Miss Ross, this is admirable. Will you pardon me if I presume somewhat upon my status as your sister's friend in Auld Lang Syne?"

"How do you mean?"

"May I petition for this drawing?"

"I doubt its being very accurate, Count Zalkiewski. Still if you really care to have it—stay, let me add a few finishing touches."

She took the volume and bent over it, quite absorbed in her employment. As she progressed with a few sketches of the pencil, throwing the cross in the wall into bolder relief, her lip curved with a suppressed smile, and after a moment she asked carelessly if there were nor romance nor legend connected with this very romantic, legendary spot.

"I believe there is; the devil ran away with the hermit, or the hermit with the devil—it boots not which," he answered as carelessly.

So, the smile yet lingering, with one nod bestowed patronizingly upon the red cross on her arm, she returned to her drawing.

Presently she turned slightly toward him, studying his face in cool, unembarrassed artist-survey, he meanwhile glancing over the volume she on his entrance had laid aside, thinking 'more of its title—"Flower, Fruit, and Thorn-Pieces"—than of its contents, and wondering if after all, life were one long Thorn-piece.

## V.

"HAST du das Schloss gesehen,  
Das hohe Schloß am Meer?  
Golden und rosig wehen  
Die Wolken d'rüber her.

"Es mochte sich nieder neigen  
Zu spiegelklare Fluth;  
Es mochte streben und steigen  
In der Abendwolken Gluth."

"MARGARET!"

She was leaning from the casement of her turret-chamber, rejoicing in the sunshine and the fresh morning breeze, when her father's call reached her. She looked down and saw him standing below, upon the cloister steps. She hastened down to him.

"Aha! that is well—my own bright mountain daisy again," Mr. Ross said, as, after the good-morrow kiss, he held her at arm's length, admiringly gazing into her upturned face, where the daily roses bloomed again in their delicate pink rosiness.

Margaret made him a sweeping courtesy.

"What," she cried, "the 'wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower' in a dilapidated riding-dress? To be sure, 'Stern Ruin's plowshare' drove over the 'scanty mantle' of the daisy of song, as over the unfortunate robe of yours. Do you see this rent, which



Luise has so carefully repaired? That was torn when my dress caught upon the broken tree, which saved me from oh! so fearful a fate!" She shuddered and hid her face, suddenly paling, upon her father's shoulder, while he drew her closer at the recollection of the hour that so nearly had dashed her beyond his protection forever.

"And now, after to-day," she added in a lighter tone, "I shall keep this habit a memento. Not that so long as I live I could forget that day, nor the noble daring of Alice's Count."

An expression of amusement lurked in Mr. Ross's eyes. Following them, Margaret turned. Count Zalkiewski stood so near that he must have heard her last words.

She returned his good-morrow with a blush that heightened yet more as he said:

"Is an involuntary eavesdropper permitted to inquire——"

She looked up then, meeting his eyes frankly, and interrupted:

"I shall forestall your inquiries to explain your being so unceremoniously appropriated. Know then, Herr Count, that my sister Alice has long since chosen you a hero of romance—Manfred the second, in truth. Not a crime heinous beyond forgiveness?" she questioned archly.

"'Twere pity to break the thread of her romance, for lack of hero. Nevertheless, I fear it is inevitable, as I have accepted Mr. Ross's invitation to Lowerz. Your sister's hero, I suspect, was manufactured from the superstitious fancies of the good Lowerzers."

Margaret smiled and turned slightly away, not

choosing to be entrapped into any further confessions.

She stood in the cloisters, leaning with loosely clasped hands against a column, while her father and the Count in converse deep strolled up and down the passage slope.

"O Count Zalkiewski!" she called, her eyes fixed upon the distant shores of the lake, "is yonder village—there, across the lake, just opposite—Egeri or Ob?"

"Egeri"—and he stopped short—"but, Miss Ross, if you are interested in our scenery, you have but a circumscribed view here. Were you to mount yonder parapet, it is far more extended, even more than from your tower. The Zuger See lies several miles to the rear, and the western tower completely conceals it from this end of the castle. And the Righi in the distance rises through a gap in the near Alps."

She sprang instantly down the steps.

"Attraction upon attraction, each in itself inducement strong enough to storm the battlements," she exclaimed.

"The rain last night, Margaret," her father suggested, dubiously regarding the glittering lawn.

Margaret raised her dress and put out her foot. Count Zalkiewski gave her a penetrating glance. But there was no coquetry in the gay smile, no vanity in the clear, frank eyes, no consciousness that the beauty of the little foot was yet striking, although clad in boots for mountain rambles meet.

At this unanswerable argument *à propos de bottes*, Margaret and Count Zalkiewski crossed the lawn to where, surrounding the western tower partly in ruina,

rose the massive granite rampart to the height of some twenty feet. A broad grassy parapet surmounted, which with the Count's assistance Margaret reached. She stood in silent delight. She looked down from a height of over fifty feet; for the wall crowned a steep, descending a rocky rampart to the road that wound along the leafy banks of the Egerl. Here the precipice was unbroken, but toward the eastern tower broad though rude steps were cut in winding ascent to the brow of the cliff, where stretched an ample lawn, denuded of rocks, shaded by giant beeches, and gladdened by wildflowers innumerable. The rampart was itself picturesque. Extending from the partly ruined tower, it swept round, broken here and there, toward the castle front, and there lay crumbling away, buried beneath a living mass of ivy and lichens. Broad beneath lay the Egeri and Ob gleaming white upon the clear blue waters. Far behind, the Zuger See shone silvery in the distance, and heavily frowned the broad brow of the Righi.

"And that is the keep, is it not?" Margaret asked, pointing to a rude square tower erected upon a crag almost in the rear of the castle.

"Ay," responded the Count. "You observe there is no opening in the walls, excepting those loopholes far above the ground. Tradition says a subterranean passage in olden time connected with the monastery; and relates how a bandit horde having desecrated the latter, penetrated, led by a traitor coward, through the secret way into the keep, last refuge of the brotherhood. And how, having massacred these, they were entombed alive within the keep by the miraculous closing of the passage none since then have been able to find."

"Horrible! But do explain how, all being buried within, their story got out?"

"Further deponent, that is, tradition, saith not. But what more probable than that their restless ghosts emerge from those loop-holes upon a moonlight night? Spirits have no bones to jeopardize in the descent, you know."

Margaret's lips parted to give Luise's more romantic version of the story. But a glance upon the arm yet bandaged, replaced words with smiles.

"Hark," she said, "there is papa asking if we are ever coming to breakfast. Let us go down."

"Lead the way to the Ruined Tower, Ursin. Mr. and Miss Ross will see that first," said the Count on rising from table. Then to his guests he added: "I have a letter which it is most important to answer by this morning's post; but if you will accept my servant as temporary cicerone, I will be with you ere you finish the inspection of the monastic cells, in which you, Miss Ross, express an interest. Ancient enough, in all conscience, and a capital place for ghost-walks, etc."

Leaving the dining-hall or ancient refectory, Mr. Ross and Margaret followed their guide into a circular hall around which wound the broad stone stairs. Ascending these, they gained a landing where were three doors. The central one of these the servant threw open.

"My master's apartments," he explained; "but I may show this one, sir. It has never been altered."

A large oblong room, in size and shape resembling the boudoir. But whereas there the nineteenth cen-

tury, direct from Paris, might throw herself and flounces luxuriously back upon the velvet-cushioned sofa, and with suspended crochet-needle skim over the pages of Dumas's last, and still no sense of the incongruous—this apartment might have been but yesterday the abode of venerable father abbot. The long, loophole-like windows of darkly-stained glass, in breadth a single narrow pane reaching almost from floor to roof, the heavy beams of which were carved in dusky figures of saints and martyrs; the high, straight-backed oaken chairs of grotesque sculpturing; and oaken-paneled walls ornamented after the same manner, pictured so vividly the days of old, that rifle and powder-flask depending from the massive branching antlers of a chamois affixed to the wall, books and papers scattered upon the heavy centre-table in lieu of vellum and illuminated manuscript, failed to recall Margaret's imagination, groping among the middle ages.

One painting only found place upon the walls. As Margaret paused before it, the servant drew near, explaining:

"The battle of Ostrolenka, Miss, where my master and I fought shoulder to shoulder in the ranks for Poland."

Margaret looked at him with suddenly awakened interest.

He was a square-built, hard-featured man, verging apparently upon fifty. He certainly had a military air now that she observed him for the first time, and he bore upon the left temple and cheek a broad white seam, contrasting with the bronzed hue of his complexion. His small gray eyes twinkled with a genial

enthusiasm, which, despite his homeliness, attracted Margaret.

"Were you wounded in that battle?" she inquired.

"This scar," passing his hand over it, "is the least. I was struck down, and unable to crawl out of the path of the trampling horse of Russia. I must have perished miserably there, but that my master placed me on his own horse, and fought my way and his through the enemy. How the sabres clashed around us! What a life-long time it seemed, though the distance was but short, while he supported me, helpless, through the mortal struggle, over the dead and the dying! And he had never seen me before that day, although I was his own serf; but he nor I knew that then."

"And then?" Margaret said, her eyes glistening and her cheek glowing.

"And then, Miss, he cared for me gently as a woman might, and after the surrender of Warsaw took me with him to Munich. And for a weary year, I lying perfectly helpless with my wounds and afterward a long dangerous fever, he worked for me. Many's the meal I have seen him refuse with a smile, that there might be enough for me as I grew better. And many's the night I've watched the light shining under his room-door till it burned dim in the dawn, and he painting or writing to feed me."

A suspicious moisture glittered on his swarthy cheek, but he brushed it away hastily, as Margaret looked at him.

"Afterward"—he recommenced.

"Stay, my good fellow," interrupted Mr. Ross good-humoredly; "it is not quite discreet to tell so

much of your master's history, even though you have so just reason to be proud of it."

"I take it kindly in you, sir," the man replied, somewhat abashed. "It is so seldom I can talk of him; for the people hereabouts have a pack of lies like the tough knots in their blockheads. I'd have hammered them into shape long ago, the fools! only my master would not let me. I hope you'll excuse me, sir."

The narrow, dismal, intricate monastic cells explored, they descended again to the refectory, where Count Zalkiewski joined them.

"I was beginning to think, Miss Ross," he said, "that you had found the secret passage to the keep, and, abjuring less ethereal associates, determined to remain there."

"Indeed," she answered, "if I could but have met with such success, I would truly not vouch for a speedy return. That visit must, I fear, be postponed indefinitely. Whither away now?"

"To the chapel, if you will, and thence to the library. The other tower is not worth visiting, being much modernized, as you have partly seen."

He opened, as he spoke, a side-door opposite that they had entered from the tower. It led into an octagonal apartment, the arched and ground roof of which was supported by light and elegant granite columns. Paintings filled the walls; a few choice statuettes occupied the niches. Exquisite Madonnas were there, Magdalens, and many a gem far-famed. Pictured legends, simple home-scenes, many a sublime and lovely landscape. But among these last were few more beautiful than that which lay extended beneath the windows, Margaret said, as they passed on.

"Beautiful as your own Scottish home?" the Count asked.

"Oh! no, no. Nowhere on earth could be that to me. Because, you know, I look at that through a long vista of happy days, and their brightness lightens the dark shades and softens the gray sternness of that rugged coast."

The Count turned rather abruptly, opening the door into the chapel. Margaret suppressed, as she entered, the exclamation of delighted surprise that rose to her lips.

The building, although not very spacious, yet appeared so, so perfect were the proportions. The lofty Gothic arches, slight and graceful, supporting the vaulted oaken roof, formed three aisles, of which the central rose loftiest. Beyond, where sunbeams streamed softened through the Gothic painted windows, occupying this entire end, was the pure white marble altar within the oaken chancel. Legends were carved upon the rich wood of the paneled walls, and cherubim and seraphim upon the arches, with here and there an elevated marble shrine. Even the tessellated pavement harmonized with the "dim religious light" subduing all.

Next came, in form, the counterpart of the picture-gallery, a conservatory, a perfect bower of loveliest vines and flowers. Adjoining this, and divided from it merely by heavy silken curtains, usually looped back, the library. A spacious apartment, with a view back, over the ruined parapet, of the mountains, and in front looking through the dim cloisters out upon the lake. The roof was an arched skylight of stained glass, each small lozenge-shaped pane set in a frame of lead. In



like manner were also formed the walls in front and rear, and the sun looked in sombrely, not gloomily, and threw a varied light upon the pavement of gray and white marble. Well-stored book-shelves, with heavy curtains looped back, ranged along either side of the room, and now and then a valuable engraving. Graceful writing-tables, luxurious easy-chairs and sofas, and a handsome organ, completed the furniture.

"Here, at least," Margaret exclaimed, throwing herself into a large chair, "the ghosts never dare intrude. They would fancy themselves in the luxurious Babylon of old, those good old fathers."

"And yet," the Count replied, "it is in the mysterious tones of that organ that they sometimes wail by night, as the neighboring peasants have it. When I came into possession, the cells—for into these was this apartment divided and subdivided—were fallen greatly into decay, which induced me to clear all away, and to imitate in the repairs the plan of the refectory. And you perceive there is little deviation from it, excepting in the glazed walls at either end."

"What a comfort it must be to the monks, if ever unseen they wander here, that their old familiar haunts have fallen into the hands of no reckless innovator, votary of gilding and gay paint, who would have mocked this simple majesty with gaudy decorations, like mad Lear's grand gray head bedizened with flaunting weeds."

"You foolish child," her father said, smiling at her grave look. "What do you suppose the monks would care now?"

"Wouldn't I care? Why, sir, I'd haunt you with all manner of horrors if you had the hardihood to

tamper with my turret at home. There would be two dark ladies on the north terrace then. And even the pretty boudoir here——”

Count Zalkiewski looked up eagerly.

“None ever occupied that before you, and none——”

“Nay, no rash vows,” she interrupted laughingly; “my utmost demand is, that those fearful bandit ghosts should not be allowed there to take up their abode. Would you imagine, papa,” she exclaimed, looking at her watch, “it is almost one? We must have breakfasted unconscionably late; but we should not forget the earlier hours of Lowerz, if we would be in time for dinner.”

A few moments found the three at the foot of the winding descent from the castle cliff, where horses had long been in readiness.

“May I not ride the black?” besought Margaret of the Count, as he motioned to Ursin, who held by the bridle a handsome bay.

“Certainly, if you prefer it. But I must warn you, Mademoiselle, he is very unmanageable.”

“I would wager Margaret could manage a Bucephalus,” Mr. Ross remarked.

“But——”

“Indeed, I would like it so much,” she said, “that is,” and she hesitated, embarrassed, “if you demur merely because of my safety.”

“That is all, believe me. I entreat——”

Margaret laughed, and called to Ursin, who had already changed the saddles.

No sooner had she taken her seat than the animal, indignant at the idea of submission to so small a hand

as that upon his bridle, reared violently, and bounded off down the road.

"She will conquer him, no fear," Mr. Ross said in reply to the anxious glance of the Count, as they followed at a slower pace.

"Brav! Brav!" admirably exclaimed the watching Ursin as the gentlemen now overtook her, waiting beneath a road-side tree, flushed and bright with the exercise and the triumph.

"Ostrolenka was scarcely more amazed than I, at your speedy success," Count Zalkiewski remarked, as side by side they rode on.

"Your horse is named Ostrolenka, then? Poor fellow!" and she patted his graceful neck; "I fancy he hangs his head somewhat in mortification; I confess, Count Zalkiewski, to some pride in my victory. Papa, my instructor, boasts of the horsewoman he has made, but my heart misgave me when at first I felt the strong spirit of the beautiful creature. Why have you called him Ostrolenka? Did you ride him in that battle?"

Count Zalkiewski turned his eyes upon her in surprise.

"Your servant," she hastened to explain, "gave us this morning some account of the battle, called forth by a picture."

"I hope the old man did not weary you? He has but one weakness, fidelity toward his country and his master. But I think you must have borne with him, judging from his exultation but now when Ostrolenka yielded you the victory."

"O Count Zalkiewski! Surely you can never mean one can be too faithful."

"Too faithful, Mademoiselle, because fidelity is little deserved, little valued. Too faithful, because the inconstant are still the happiest in this changeful world."

The dark lashes drooped sadly over her great, earnest eyes, and she made no reply.

"Your Fidelis," Mr. Ross said, coming to her rescue, "pictured a scene upon that battle-field which renders me the prouder that it is to Count Zalkiewski I owe the priceless boon of my daughter's life."

The Count's bow was given to the father, but his eyes sought the daughter's questioningly. The quick uplifting of those drooping lashes, heavy with tears not to be shed, was all the answer needful.

"But, Margaret," said her father, "what grand mistake did I hear you make just now? Either you are woefully at fault in dates, or you imagine this animal to have been a war-horse fifteen years ago."

She laughed. "Since I must plead guilty to the one or the other, I choose the former. And now if you do not exchange our quiet walk for a more animated pace, we will never reach Lowerz."

Lowerz was reached, however. The sound of mingled voices and laughter discovered the gay group in the garden, before the low-branched trees and shrubbery disclosed them. Mrs. Ross was seated there beneath the shade where flickering lights from the laden rose-vine in the maple overhead threw a tinge of reflected color upon her pallid cheek, and touched into warmth the smooth bands of her pale brown hair. Beneath the maples also Alice stood. Her cheek needed no reflected tint, the glowing roses were not

brighter as she stood there, the soft tresses blown from her brow, the uplifted arms gleaming fair as marble from the falling sleeves of her blue muslin, her slight figure swaying to and fro as she caught or flung the grace-hoops to her antagonist, Count Falkenstein. Mr. More lounged near, counting the scores and making himself useful in the mirth-provoking way.

"Where is Harry?" Margaret inquired, looking round for him when she had been clasped in the long, close embrace of her mother, and received Alice's eager kisses.

"Why, he has missed you after all! For once he grew impatient, and set off to meet you, though I told him he could not know which way you would come. But Margaret, you schemer," Alice whispered, as together the sisters moved from the gate; "one thing I know, your whole adventure was a plot against my wager."

" 'The best-laid plans o' mice and men  
Gang aft agley! ' "

quoted Margaret; "for, mark you, unhappy Alice, your Count has requested me to make use of yonder coveted steed until papa can procure another."

A silken rustle from the adjacent arbor, only hidden by its vines, and a fairy figure, fresh and bright, with dark braids pushed carelessly back from the brow, one rounded cheek flushed with the pressure of a rosy palm, and two eyes only half open in the sudden glare of light, flitted out and up to Margaret, still rubbing her eyes with the air of a sleepy child.

"Ciel!" she cried, embracing her rapturously, "how

I could oversleep myself there on that hard bench and you here, chère Marguerite! Mille pardons!"

Margaret turned to introduce her to the Polish Count. She called his name as he stood in conversation with Alice.

The Baroness bestowed upon him a most graceful bow, which surely deserved a ready return. But when his eyes first fell upon her, he started, his stern face lighted up strangely and tenderly; and involuntarily, perhaps unconsciously, he muttered:

"It is, it must be, I will speak to her. But no—better to wait."

And very quietly he returned her unconscious bow.

Unconscious, Margaret, watching keenly, saw. For she had partly heard his muttered words. But only an instant could she note his whole attention concentrated with absorbing interest on the Baroness, ere Alice called:

"Such a charming plan we have arranged, Margaret! Mr. More, you are appointed recruiting officer for our company. Exert your utmost eloquence and enlist every one."

Thus adjured, with an emphatic Oyez, he proceeded to explain that Miss Alice and he, with his able young adjutant, Count Falkenstein, had resolved on attacking by moonlight the ruins of Schaanau, realm of divers ghosts, witches, and hobgoblins. And whereas the highway to that reverend castle, situate on an island by the same name, is, after mature deliberation, duly concurred in by aforesaid adjutant, deemed insecure for foot-passengers—therefore, resolved"—pointing to a gayly-striped skiff moored to the bank below—"that there be procured this specimen of the fine

arts so resembling a gorgeous rainbow, which shall transport safely as Mohammed's rainbow the faithful to the shores of the Happy Isle. Wherefore this present company is invited to convene *sine die*, but with eventide, to the even tide of yonder lake.

"Perfect," applauded Margaret—then to Zalkiewski. "And you, Count, will surely not desert us?"

Standing there at her side with folded arms and eyes bent on the ground, so absorbed was he that she had to repeat her words. He raised his head then, with a quick-flashing glance from herself to the Baroness, who now chatted with her brother, her hand lightly laid on his. Margaret heard Zalkiewski sigh heavily.

"I ask it as a special favor—we must have you," she said, thinking compassionately of his dreary life day after day, and of the contrast with that which he had given her back.

"Then I go." Quiet voice and manner all unreadable.

"Thank you," she replied simply.

Count Falkenstein, standing near, reddened angrily, and as Margaret turned carelessly away, and passing him on her way to the cottage made some allusion to the party, he answered shortly that he was not going.

She raised her eyes and gave him a sweeping glance. She perceived his anger, but not being able to divine the cause, chose not to notice it.

"Oh! I thought you were," she said very coolly, and was passing on, when he placed himself in her path.

"You do not care?" he asked, in smothered tones.

"In faith, not I, if you do not wish to go," she replied, looking at him in perplexity.

"Yet you have asked Count Zalkiewski, actually requested him as a favor to yourself," he began vehemently.

"Sir," she interrupted, while the color surged to her very brow. "How and by what right you venture thus to speak to me, I am at a loss to imagine."

Recalled to himself by her manner yet more than her words, he stammered something—what, she did not understand, but understanding that it was meant for an apology, the fire died out in her eyes, and she smiled as she said she was quite willing to forget.

"And will you ask me to come?"

"That I won't, Herr von Blödigkeit. Consult your own sweet will, and adieu or au revoir, as you see fit to make it."

And waving her hand gayly she flitted past him into the cottage.



## VI.

"~~The~~ old convent ruin the ivy rots off,  
Where the owl hoots by day and the toad is sun-proof—  
Where no singing-birds build, and the trees, gaunt and gray,  
As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way.  
But is this the wind's doing?"

THE moon was glancing above the mountain-belted horizon, a crescent hope within a darkening future, when the boating-party assembled upon the beach. The rainbow, transgressing all rules of Nature's appointment, made its appearance even at this twilight hour, and it was not long ere each had taken his or her place therein.

Margaret smiled as Count Falkenstein came forward and claimed his at her side in the bow.

"Actually?" she exclaimed. "Can it be that you have indeed decided in our favor, and resolved to forego the well-nigh irresistible charms of the Low-erz Hostellerie? The Count-worship of Mein Herr Host, the blandishments of the worthy Hausmeisterin, and—ah Monsieur!—the sunset beechen grove and its bewitching little French dryad?"

He looked annoyed. "That dryad, bewitching though she be," he said, "is better fitted to haunt the shades of the Champs Elysées than the rugged cliffs of

- Switzerland. For these, Mademoiselle, one seeks a mountain nymph."

His bow designated the nymph in question, and with a laughing reverence she appropriated the compliment.

"Endeavoring to propitiate the offended nymph?" she said. "But you should reserve your compliments for a season of more urgent need, the fair dryad herself being fair excuse for occasional desertions from the Scottish Thistle to the Fleur-de-lis—the more especially as the thistle is wont to prick upon occasion. By the by, how is it that with the most amicable intentions in the world, we are so very apt to quarrel?"

His brow clouded, but anon he answered laughingly:

"Have you not a proverb, Mademoiselle, warning against the pain of touching lightly the armed thistle? It may be I strive so to grasp that the sting may be harmless. Strive, I say—for, weh mir, too often am I nettled."

"Vive the Carduus Benedictus!" and she tossed handkerchief in air. "And let me assure you that this evening all the nettles are left behind."

"But I like the nettles best," he replied, with some seriousness; "for the nettles stay, and one learns after a time where to find them, and in what path to step unstung. But the down flies here, there, and everywhere, and, even if caught, is so passive. Like you, Mademoiselle, in some of your amiable moods. With me at least."

"Very well, then, nettles or down, which you will," she returned indifferently, while her eyes wandered

to the stern of the boat, where Count Zalkiewski leaned with folded arms and contracted brows beside the Baroness Waldien, and gazed intently, not upon her face, but on its duplicate in the waters. Margaret was pondering over his start, and long strange gaze on their introduction, when an impatient movement from her companion struck her attention, and she turned. His brow was clouded, his very attitude restless, and his eyes too, bent half angrily upon the party in the stern, whence she now observed Alice's ringing laughter as Mr. More spoke to her. A short fierce sigh escaped Falkenstein. Margaret's sympathies were touched, and she began to say something, any thing, to withdraw his attention from that flirtation to which she thought she traced the sigh. She did not clearly know what she said in her embarrassment, which was certainly not diminished by his turning full upon her, asserting confidently:

"You are pitying me."

"I—I——"

"You shall not scorn. I will keep my manhood, I will endure, even though I may be madly—most madly—in love. Mademoiselle, must it be madly? Have I no hope?"

She had not raised her eyes in her confusion, and she did not see the gaze which might have told her it was not as mediatrix that he looked to her. She only replied to the smothered passion of his voice, while her own sank low, and her color deepened—

"I do not know—I can not tell. In time, who knows——"

Her hand rested upon the bench beside his own. He grasped it, wringing it so violently as he released,

that the imprints of the rings was left upon the delicate fingers. At that moment the oarsmen drew in their oars, and the boat glided into the harbor formed by massive overhanging rocks.

With an effort Margaret shook off her depression, and merrily the party, Count Falkenstein the merriest there, traversed the dusky grove and scaled the moonlit cliffs, until at last was gained the ruined portal of Castle Schaanau.

Upon a lofty promontory it was built, grim shadows thrown by tower and battlement troubling like shades of the past the serenity of the silvery waters to-night. A weird, tottering old maple tossed its withered boughs soughing athwart the entrance; and as Margaret sprang forward and parted them, standing upon the threshold, bats, their realm of darkness invaded by the visitors' flickering torch, fluttered against the damp and mouldering walls, and a banished owl set up his lamentation from a ledge near by.

The visitors paused at length within the spacious banquet-hall, where heavy supporting columns of gray stone multiplied themselves in the dim recesses into myriad ghastly forms, as it were those of former banqueters, Margaret said to Count Zalkiewski, who stood beside her.

"A haunted chamber, truly, and bloody is its history," was his response.

She shrank nearer to his side, with a startled glance around. But immediately she laughed, and said half ashamed:

"That was only my Scottish faith in the mysterious, taken by surprise. But I wish you would tell me the bloody history."

"Look, then, Mademoiselle, there at your feet. See you those stains time-deepened? There was spilled the life-blood of knightly lover, by the treacherous Austrian bailiff, in hope to wed the fair daughter of the castle and her goodly acres. Every year, while the stars hide their tear-dimmed eyes, and clouds gather like evil thoughts when angels are not watching, then, far above the wailing of the blast, arises an unearthly shriek, and those who dare go forth to look upon the castle walls, behold there a ladye robed in blood-stained white, bearing aloft a flaming torch, the glare of which falls luridly upon the dark traitor fleeing terrified before the dread Nemesis, until with a fatal mis-step he plunges from the parapet down, down into the raging lake, from the very same spot whence she— But see, the torch-bearers are deserting us. Shall we finish our story upon the parapet in the moonlight?"

On the parapet then, distant laughter still arising from the halls below, and commingling with the gurgling of the waves as they rippled in and out among the rocks at the base of the rampart.

Margaret sat upon the grassy slope while the Count threw himself beside her. Both were silent, until Margaret, rousing herself from reverie, said:

"And now our legend, if you will."

"In true legendary style then. Even the wind sighs in rhythm through these ruins.

Calm on the lake's upheaving breast  
The Isle of Schaanau lies asleep,  
And low beneath the moss-grown keep  
The troubled waters sink to rest.

Wild walleth the night-wind through turret and hall,  
Where the spider weaveth the funeral pall,  
And voices of old from the dead Past call,  
While the night-owl responds from the crumbling old wall,  
Tu-whit ! the midnight is murky and drear—  
Tu-whoo ! the deed is a deed of fear.

On turret-walls the moonbeams sleep,  
Where shadowy visions flit and flee—  
The stars are watching silently,  
And sad-browed clouds in night-dews weep.  
Wild walleth the night-wind through turret and hall—  
The roses sigh round the maiden's bower,  
And the ivy trembles that clings to her tower,  
While the night-owl forebodes, from the crumbling old wall,  
Tu-whit ! the midnight is murky and drear—  
Tu-whoo ! the deed is a deed of fear.

Red burns the wine i' the banquet-hall,  
In golden goblets brimming o'er—  
Yet redder, on the stony floor,  
Slow, one by one, the life-drops fall.  
Wild walleth the night-wind through turret and hall—  
Ay, a ghastly rede, where the torch burns low ;  
And the dead man's eyes—how they flicker so !  
While the night-owl shrieks loud from the crumbling old wall,  
Tu-whit ! the midnight is murky and drear—  
Tu-whoo ! the deed is a deed of fear.

On parapet the maiden stands,  
The waters moan in sleep below,  
The moonlight toseth to and fro ;  
The false, false steward grasps her hands.  
Wild walleth the night-wind through turret and hall—  
She shrieks, but the dead answer not her call.  
One glance to the dark skies—a far-plashing fall—  
Yon black silvered wave is brave funeral pall ;  
While the night-owl laments from the crumbling old wall,  
Tu-whit ! the midnight is murky and drear—  
Tu-whoo ! the deed is a deed of fear.

" 'The waters moan in sleep below—  
The moonlight tosseth to and fro—  
Wild walleth the night-wind through turret and hall' "—

repeated Margaret as if to herself. "Is not this an inspiration of this very night? Hark! the lament of the night-owl," as at that moment from a distant but-tress rose the mournful cry; "I almost fear to behold the white-robed maiden gliding by," she added.

"Lo, the white-robed maiden!" he said, as Alice at that instant made her appearance upon the verge of the parapet..

She came forward, Mr. More at her side, and presently the entire party reassembled there.

"I declare," Alice cried, sinking down upon the grass, "it is the greatest relief to be once more out in the bright moonlight. I've been frightened half to death, Margaret! You should hear Count Falkenstein's fearful story away down in those grim vaults. Do you know they are haunted? Mr. More and I have been scampering away from every dark shadow—on the eve of fainting in every dark corner on our upward route."

"Fairly routed the ghosts, however, although we did crow like cravens. Did you encounter the spectral hosts in full retreat, Miss Ross?" asked Mr. More.

"Oh! yes, indeed! Count Zalkiewski is the magician who summoned them before me with spell and gramarye. But you are not come to call us from this enchanted ground?"

"Not I. And I move that whoso shall make mention of the words 'home' or 'Lowerz,' during the next hour, shall be tried by jury and punished without reprieve."

"Agreed," asserted Alice, "provided always the penalty be not banishment to Lowerz."

"Guilty, guilty," called out several voices.

"Why, how, I did not say one word about going," Alice cried, confused and laughing.

"Nay, but you said Lowerz, Miss Alice," Mr. More interposed, it is to be feared not altogether inadvertently.

"Particeps criminis," pronounced Mr. Ross, amid increasing merriment.

Mr. More bowed, and led Alice forward.

"My Lord, and ladies and gentlemen of the jury," he began, with a preliminary reverence first to Mr. Ross and then to the company who had taken their seats upon the parapet, with the exception of Count Falkenstein who remained standing moodily apart, "we plead guilty to the charge, confess our high crime and misdemeanor, and have now only to throw ourselves upon your gracious clemency, trusting that you make due allowance for the well-known weakness of woman and remember the irresistible attraction exercised by her over the gallant sons of Adam, causing them, by following in her footsteps, to plunge into all manner of follies."

"No pardon, my Lord Judge. The prisoner deserves to be committed rather for contempt of court," cried Margaret.

"And the punishment? since it is not to be banishment to Lo——" Mrs. Ross ended abruptly.

"A Saul among the prophets!" laughed Harry May. "What say you to a song, Cousin Maude?"

"Or a legend," she suggested.

"Song and legend both, be it," decided the Judge.



During the moment's consideration, Margaret's glance sought Count Falkenstein. As his eyes met hers gloomily, she rose, following a sudden impulse, and went to him, saying softly :

"Will you not join us, Count ? Nay, you have not pronounced the forbidden words, and may not be banished from our charmed circle."

The shade passed from his brow, and when she returned and took possession of a mossy stone, he followed and stood leaning against the *débris* which formed a low back to her seat.

Order being restored, Mr. More took the floor.

"I pray your pardon for any trifling Hibernicism that may occur in my song," he remarked by way of preface, "not that there is aught Hibernian about me, by no means. The song is one of a college chum. You remember Charlie Sheridan, Falkenstein ? Now you must all join in the chorus. Miss Alice, I rely upon you."

And he startled the Swiss echoes, thus :

Ay, the bards of the ancients were very great poets,  
With their arma virumque, and all such ado ;  
But we of the moderns are never so ghostly  
As to sing to dead men and their rusty arms too.

*Chorus.*—But hail to arms white as the foam on Killarney !

All hail to eyes bright as her waters' deep blue !  
Believe me, the ancients sang nothing but blarney, [do.  
For the maids, faith, with them would have nothing to

So leave we blind Homer to grope for his heroes ;  
We will not be led by the blind to the tombs ;  
Nor seek we a Venus in meadows Elysian,  
While the Bluebell of Sootland in Schaanau yet blooms.

Chorus and consequent applause dying away, Falkenstein asked :

"Who was this Venus of Sheridan's, More? I should have deemed arma virumque far more in the style of the misogynist Sheridan."

"Poor Charlie! It was disappointment made him cynical. His Venus, and I believe his first, certainly his last love, was little Rose Geraghty, 'Erin's White Rose in Killarney,' so the line originally ran. The gipsy jilted him for—me—and shall I confess it?—me for a cousin of hers. But Sheridan, instead of drawing out the Rose's mischievous thorn with one groan and no more for its sharpness, has left it rankling still. Don't you think," he ended in a lower tone to Alice, "that flirtations should be classified premeditated murder, and punished accordingly?"

"Of course. Always provided a clear case of *felo-de-se* be not made out. These poor victims, it is to be feared, too often immolate themselves upon the shrine of their own vanity, instead of being sacrificed to a woman's."

"But Mademoiselle must not defraud us of her legend," reminded Falkenstein.

"Well then, as poetry is *à la mode* to-night, my legend is in verse:

"Hark! the raven flaps his wing  
 In the briered dell below.  
 Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing  
 To the night-mares as they go."  
 Lo! the moon's dead face glares forth  
 Through her pall of drifting cloud,  
 And the wild wind from the north  
 In yon lone pine sobs aloud.  
 Grimly frown the haggard crags  
 Down upon the shivering lake,

And each fearful ripple lags  
Ere 't upon the shore doth break.

Margaret started, and her lips parted as if to speak. She leaned forward, but Alice was sheltered behind the broad shoulders of Harry May. Then checking herself she sank back, her hands trembling at first as absently she twisted together the fringes of her shawl.

"You are cold, Mademoiselle," Falkenstein said, stooping to assist her in arranging the shawl more closely about her shoulders.

She thanked him with a smile, while Alice continued:

Calm the Righi stands, and proud,  
Sunset halo round her head;  
Drear Pilatus wrapt in shroud—  
Shroud deep-stained, a gory red.

Nevermore the lake knows rest,  
Still the darkened waters plain,  
Waving reeds upon its breast  
Rusted to a crimson stain.

And they beckon, beckon slow—  
And they murmur, pointing down—  
Deep and swift the waters flow,  
Some dread memory to drown.

Far, far down within the deeps,  
There he lies—the waves shrink back—  
Not anear the sea-worm creeps—  
'Neath his head the weeds are black.

Evermore that glassy stare,  
Never wave the lids may close,  
Limp right hand all red doth glare,  
Cool wave never o'er it flows.

Evermore and evermore,  
Stillness that is not repose,

Blind, and darkness presseth sore,  
Blood-stained, where the current flows.

"Who knows?" Alice replied to the demand for the author's name. "I found it on the pavement in the banquet-hall, scribbled upon a slip of paper which I picked up, supposing it to have been dropped for me by some literary ghost."

"Do you positively aver that it is not your own?" questioned Falkenstein.

"I do, and summon Mr. More as witness. Why, my greatest attainment in the poetical line was a certain couplet on Harry, rhymed after an hour's intense study, and much in the vein of 'hey diddle diddle.' Do you remember Margaret?"

"Eureka!" cried Harry, suddenly confronting Margaret, who finding herself discovered shrank back and playfully put her hands before her face. "So it was to drown this poor wretch up there, that only the other day you were asking me so many questions about Mount Pilatus. I told you next to nothing, so how did you find your 'briered dell?'"

"I did not find it," Margaret answered; "but those lines of Chatterton haunted me, and you know there is really a tradition of Pilate's drowning himself on Mount Pilatus. I am curious to know whether there may not be a briered dell."

"Why not undertake an exploration?" Falkenstein suggested.

"The very thing!" "Charmant!" exclaimed Mr. More and the Baroness in a breath. And Alice clapped her hands, bowing low in gratitude to the suggestor, ere turning to her mother.

"Mamma, you are quite strong now. Why should

we not go to-morrow?" Then, as her mother smiled and nodded, she continued eagerly, appealing to her father:

"Can we not go, papa? Will you arrange it?"

"How would a lengthened excursion do—Pilatus, the Righi, Luzern, all the lions?"

The plan being unanimously approved, Lowerz was released from ban, that late hours to-night should not prevent an early start upon the morrow.

## VII.

"EACH cliff and headland and green promontory,  
Graven with records of the past,  
Excites to hero-worship."

THE morrow dawned bright as ever eager expectants could desire. And faces no less bright greet the sun as he rises above the far-crowned heights closing in the eastern horizon. Bustle predominates, here a basket, there a cushion or long-sought shawl, borne triumphantly aloft by hurrying servants until safely stowed away in the carriage where Mr. and Mrs. Ross, the Baroness and Mr. More, composing the lazy list, form a lively quartette, while the horses, snuffing the morning breeze, paw the ground, impatient to be off.

They are off at last, and Margaret, until now indolently leaning upon the gate, wreathing and twisting around her hat a handful of silvery immortelles, and as indolently hearing without joining in the conversation between Alice and the attendant gentlemen, starts up, crying with a but half-suppressed yawn:

"To horse, to horse! or we shall inevitably wander off into the Land of Nod, oblivious of the Righi.

Now for a glorious race to awaken us all. Allons! Who wins?"

And mounted on Ostrolenka she looks back, waving her little gloved hand in defiant challenge.

All Lowerz is awake, and many a cottage doorway filled with the voluminous proportions of the matron, inquisitively shading her eyes from the strengthening sunbeams with broad brown hand, and ready to bestow smile and nod upon the passing cavalcade. From many a cottage doorstep, too, glance up demure little rosy maidens from their knitting or netting, or pause in combing the great yellow-brown hanks of spun silk which hang in festoons against window-frames and doorways, bringing from the sunny vales of Italy occupation and bread to many an Alpine home. Now a merry-faced urchin, first setting down with careful hands the precious wooden bowl of dark bread and milk, rushes frantically out into the middle of the road, waving aloft a ragged apology for a hat, and receiving in return smiling recognition from the departing tourists. For this expedition *en masse* seems a final leave-taking to the good Lowerzers, many of whom have been taught by word and deed truly to value the Scottish strangers.

And now is neared the Zuger See. Margaret gazes with interest upon the wooded heights mirroring themselves far below in the blue waters; for there, saith history, stood Tell, and sped the arrow which pierced the tyrant heart of Gessler.

And Art is passed, and Küssnacht gained. Here at the foot of the great Righi the carriage party mount their horses for the ascent. The gay, the sometimes dangerous, the always wondrously beau-

tiful ascent! The wild defiles, the fearful ravines, the distant glimpse of glittering lake or blossoming valley, the darksome forest arches, opening like avenues of fairyland, the grand, the glorious Kulm, mist-encircled, towering up on cloudy pinnacle, to heaven!

Then the long and welcome rest at noon, beneath those mighty pines on a carpeting of many-colored mosses, beside the gurgling rivulet where golden buttercups and dew-bright blossoms of the blue gentian write for us upon the turf home-letters of childhood's haunts and childhood's dreams, while the glowing Alpenrosen, swaying in their rocky footholds, hint of the cosy, unaccustomed present.

And the pilgrimage to the shrine of 'our Lady of the Snow,' down in a green hollow below the Kulm—where the reverend priest who has just been officiating tells how three brothers from the nearest convent remain in these deep solitudes the winter long, cheered by no mortal presence excepting when occasionally the peasant proprietor of one of the mountain perches between earth and heaven, veritable cottages, if not castles, in the air—fastens on his crampons, and thither climbs his way. Then is the silence unbroken save by the distant passing of a mountain sledge, laden with wood and guided down the steep pathways by stalwart peasant or mayhap a maiden, the sledger's cheery shout and song awakening the forest which man and beast and bird have so long left in slumber.

The sunset glow is in the air, and its glory rests upon the Righi. Solitude remained below, in the woodland recesses. Here is a motley multitude as-



sembled. In the background, with the indispensable accompaniments of stables, stable-boys, din and bustle, stands the inn, about the doors and balconies of which lounge guides variously engaged in eating, drinking, smoking, and gossiping, while from a window in marvelous proximity to the pointed, overhanging roof, leans a bonny maiden, carrying on, as she airs her blankets and her linen, a stealthy flirtation with a gallant below, who sports the black leather small-clothes and white stockings, the scarlet vest and long blue open jacket, of Schwyz. In the foreground are groups of every description and of almost every country. Here a Russian princess with her noble retinue discourses in astounding consonants. There a knot of German students in gay pedestrian garb, personating in appearance every phase of character, from the fierce bandit Don Whiskerado to the fair-haired, mild-eyed poet or musician. A Tyrolese peddler, chamois-booted, his grave, clear-cut features looking national beneath the shade of the national black-cock plume, displays his wealth of beauty to a circle of admiring country-people. Here a family of English exclusives, in the well-to-do, over-dressed shopkeeper style, upon the approach of our party turn the significant shoulder. Here, there, and everywhere, the ubiquitous Yankee, "doing" the Alps, striding about, a very lord of creation, ejecting his tobacco-juice and his opinions with the same determination, equally careless whether in or out of place, and not to be daunted by the repeated rebuffs of the English exclusives, whom he leaves at last with the query, addressed with insinuating politeness to the red-headed dandy of the party :

"I say, stranger, did you have any kin-folks mixed up in the Revolution? Because in our picture of the battle of Lexington up to hum, there's a red-coat a streaking it before our bayonets, the living image of your grandfather."

Upon which information concerning the family tree, the dandy discontinues his employment of switching at the turf blossoms with his cane, raises his head and stares in astonishment through a piece of glass stuck in his eye, then saunters contemptuously away.

To all this our travelers give but passing attention, the glorious scenery claiming all their regard. The whole heavens are glowing in their crimson and gold, and as a blood-red streak wavers from denser clouds down over the Pilatus, standing up distinct and isolated in its gloom against the bright skies, Margaret thinks of the legend, and the cloud rises there, a bloody witness over the grave of the blood-stained soul whom neither the water which he vainly defiled in the judgment-hall, nor the waters of the lake where tradition holds he strove to find repose, could purify. Northward Lake Zurich glimmers faint as moonlight. Red and seared as though but lately scarred with its stupendous slide of earth, arises the Rossberg, throwing the shadow of its own melancholy over the blooming valley of Lowerz. Mythen is veiled in amber mists—lakes, rivers, villages, fade in the deepening twilight; and afar retreat the mountains in Uri, until they are blending with shadows in the valley of the Reuss.

And ere many hours, mountains, lakes, valleys, scenes and visions of the past, the present, and the future, are all blending in the indistinct shadowland of dreams.

Dispelling the shadows comes the early dawn, and with it a long, shrill, echoing blast of herdsman's horn, arousing the dreamers to the reality that the herald trumpeter of Dan Phœbus has announced his approach, and that whoso would behold his glorious advent must be

"Up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate,"

to which those are liable who brave the difficulties of a toilet in the dark, and of blind gropings down ladder-like stairs, and through unfamiliar turns and passages.

Multiform are the styles of dress, scarcely to be found in any journal de modes, past, present, or, it is to be hoped, future, (although the wisest may not discern the signs of the times on Fashion's dial,) which moment by moment make a sleepy or an eager exit, out into the chill gray twilight where the stars are paling one by one, where cloudland and mountain merge their indistinct borders, and where for some moments reigns a silence of expectancy and awe.

Presently through the hush is heard the rustling of the morning breeze among the far-off pines. Slowly beneath the silvery mists the rosy flushes deepen. The floating clouds turn toward earth their golden linings—the golden portals of the east unfold—and the fiery chariot passes through.

Afar, gleam and glisten snowy Alps. A dozen lakes, framed in by towering crags or drooping forest foliage, reflect, mirror-like, the splendor of the heavens. And the trembling mists, stooping low above the valleys, like phantom forms of water-sprite

or Undine, waver to and fro, and flee before the all-conquering sun.

For it is day upon the Righi. And now the different groups disperse, hurrying back to the inn; some suddenly aware, under the increasing light upon the subject, of the unbecomingness of their attire; some yawning and casting around sleepy and discontented glances; some shivering, pinched and blue in the frosty atmosphere; others moving on with firm step and complacent air, as conscious of a duty duly performed, albeit a somewhat painful one. Guides are lounging in the faint sunshine, looking on with unconcerned familiarity; cattle low in the green pastures below; stable-boys are lazily beginning their accustomed avocations. From the inn issues now an appetizing odor, and mistress and maid are hurrying to and fro, bearing to the unpretending board great bowls of goat's milk and of the country-made wine, and steaming wooden trenchers of oatmeal porridge, roast potatoes and toasted cheese, with accompaniments of stewed fruits.

It was long past mid-day when our travelers made the first long pause in their rambling descent of the mountain in a direction opposite to that of the Küssnacht ascent. There, down in a romantic glen—a very Sleepy Hollow, inclosed by rocky bastions, battlements, and towers—gushed forth the “Fountain of the Sisters.” A Sleepy Hollow Nature destined it to be, reposing beneath the guardianship of giant cliffs and soothed by the low plash of the waters. But intrusive man willed otherwise, and conspired with fame to convert these cold springs into miraculous baths. Thus the echoes were wide awake when our party

descended and mingled with others straying among the rocks, grouped beneath the magnificent beeches, or watching the immersion of three or four credulous experimentalists, who, according to the oracles, must plunge in in full attire, and afterward act as their own drying-lines.

Wandering from her own circle, Margaret joined the spectators at this ceremony, and stood quietly observant of passing scenes and people. Among the latter, two presently riveted her attention. They came leisurely strolling up a mossy bank, kept, by the moist influence of the waters beneath, more vividly green than the surrounding slopes. There they stopped, the stout, middle-aged gentleman and the plump, little English-looking girl, whose prettiness was fresh and blooming as the Alpenrosen in her shadowing hat. Her hand, loosely clasping a cluster of wild flowers, rested on his arm, her bright blue eyes were raised to his, and the full lips parted in a merry laugh as she listened; while Margaret, who was too distant to hear, caught herself involuntarily smiling—his manner, and the quiet twinkle of his keen gray eyes were so fraught with dry humor. Now the girl leaned forward, splashing with her riding-whip in the water, and furthering on its downward journey a paper boat launched by a child above. As she raised herself again, casting a careless glance around, the color rushed into her face, and to Margaret's amazement she precipitately dropped whip and flowers, and quitting her companion's arm without a word, vanished in the crowd. He turned, astonished, to look in the direction she had disappeared, but presently relinquished the vain re-

conciling himself to the loss with some reflection muttered in an undertone.

Margaret, a moment after, seized the clue to the flight, in the approach of the very Yankee whose stolid imperturbability had so amused her the evening before. She was watching with no little wonder the gentleman's markedly courteous reception of him, when she heard close at hand the rustling of a dress, and looking round, discovered the little runaway, evidently using her as a screen. Their eyes met, and Margaret could not forbear a smile, while the young lady laughed outright, saying half inquiringly:

"So you saw my maneuver? Oh! I was so afraid that horrid man would find me out!"

"Why do you not send him away?" Margaret asked, amused by the earnest tones.

"Send him away! Oh! I never know how to do any thing of that kind. And besides, unfortunately, he saved my life yesterday, and my uncle won't hear of my being rude to him. He thinks me shockingly ungrateful as it is."

"And is it not somewhat so to speak of his having *unfortunately* saved your life?"

"Perhaps—but I do not think you would say so if you knew how it all came to pass. You see," she continued, dropping on the rocks at Margaret's feet, her eager, upturned face assisting in her explanation, "last evening I was straying about on the mountain-top, gathering flowers, when I espied the prettiest tuft of moss imaginable, growing midway down a long green slope, at the foot of which was a deep ravine, it is true, but so far off that I did not dream of any danger. I'm the veriest coward. But no sooner

had I taken a few steps than I began sliding, sliding down the slippery turf, and would certainly have slid straight on over the precipice, if it had not been for this creature. But only think how he rescued me," she went on, in a tone between laughing and crying with vexation. "As I was slipping along, past the rock on which he was sitting cross-legged—I was too frightened to see even the rock then, but I had noticed him before—he poked out one long leg attached to a foot almost as large as the rock he was holding on by. You may be sure I clutched it without examining too closely into appearances. My uncle says he has heard Nature requires nine tailors to make one man, but never before saw her patent requiring three feet to make one. Now just imagine my feelings when, after being slowly drawn up, and safely deposited on the rocks—my screams had drawn, I don't know how many witnesses there—I relinquished my hold on the whole calf's skin, I am convinced it was, which I had been clasping so passionately in my arms."

Merry laughter, in which Margaret joined, interrupted her words.

"Of course, the first silly thing I did was to cry heartily with vexation, and right there before every body too. And, of course, my adventure—I always wanted to have an Alpine adventure—*over*, went for nothing, for who ever heard of a heroine and a calf-skin? And then when it was taken away, to behave as if she were crying for it like a baby! Moreover, quite to do away with any sentiment which the calf-skin might have inspired, I have my suspicions that its owner was fully aware of the consequences of botanizing on that slope, and would not warn me for

the express purpose of making a hero of himself, with not the least danger either to himself or me. For from the position, there could be no doubt of his power to rescue me. I might have saved myself perhaps; only when I am frightened, every thing is in a whirl before me—I can not think. I observed him looking after me with a very peculiar smile as I turned off from the rocks. But I dare not insist upon this to my uncle, with whom the Yankee trick has succeeded perfectly.”

Just then Harry made his appearance, looking anxiously round in search of Margaret. She called to him, and gayly explained the difficulties of the distressed damsel.

He entered into them gallantly, as errant knight befitted, and offered a safe retreat and a merry party, if she would accompany Miss Ross and engage himself as future screen.

“And Mr. May will inform your uncle of the whereabouts of his runaway niece,” Margaret suggested.

“Not for worlds!” hastily interposed the niece. “You have not, like me, been taught Yankee pertinacity by dire experience. I should never escape him the second time. Besides, my uncle knows me too well to be surprised or alarmed at any vagrancy of mine, or of my sex, as he declares. But I have not introduced myself all this time. My name is Rose Lynde; my uncle’s Robert Lynde, of Lyndehurst, Lancashire, where I have lived with him in his old bachelor’s hall ever since I was a very little girl. Now let us go, if you please, for I see that creature shifting himself from side to side as if preparatory to a move.”

Upon a shady cliff overhanging the water, was found



the safe retreat, nor did the promise of a merry party there assembled, fail. Time sped by so fast that lengthening shadows warning of the sun's decline, took all by surprise.

The various groups had begun to disperse, when lo! rapidly bearing down upon ours, like a gaunt tall-masted sloop under full sail from his own native fishing-village, the dreaded Yankee came. Miss Lynde uttered a faint cry, and laughingly pushed Margaret before her. But the sharp Yankee proved, to use his own familiar phraseology, one too many for her that time. He saw her, and called out:

"Uncle looking for you, Miss. It's getting late, and I calculate it's about time you was moving."

"The young lady goes with me to her uncle," replied Harry, to whom Rose's eyes appealed.

"Oh!" she whispered to Margaret, "if I could but give him a sly push and send him flying from that ledge, down into the water, I think I could endure him for a week to come."

Meanwhile the Yankee, piqued out of his accustomed coolness, inquired if Harry was Miss Lynde, or claimed to be a gentleman? It was Miss Lynde he was speaking to.

Harry made a hasty forward movement, his interrogator made as hasty a retrograde one, and as the fates would have it, accident speedily accomplished Miss Lynde's wish. The unlucky Yankee, after performing a series of desperate somersaults, plunged headlong into the fountain below.

"Now is your time to be quits and play heroine by rescuing your Adonis," Margaret, as soon as she could restrain her mirth, said to Miss Lynde.

But Miss Lynde only shook her head, asserting her incapacity for the *role*, while tears coursed down her cheeks as though she were lamenting instead of laughing over the fate of Brother Jonathan, who presently, nothing disconcerted, reappeared dripping like a Triton, amid unsuppressed hilarity.

"That pesky bath has cooled me off," he remarked quietly, as, shaking himself, he turned away.

Perhaps none of the bystanders were so highly diverted as the dandy of the "English exclusives," at the misstep of his late adversary. The triumph seemed to open his heart to humanity in general; for, gleefully rubbing his hands together, he cast an appealing glance around, exclaiming:

"Aw, yes, that cooled him, the hair down 'ere is very 'ot, too 'ot for 'im, it seems."

"The hair down 'ere is quite red 'ot," agreed Mr. More in an aside to the laughing Alice, fixing his eyes upon the cockney's unmistakably fiery chevelure.

That timely plunge proved the means of ridding Miss Lynde and her uncle, who now joined her, of their incumbrance; as the guidance of an active young peasant in a shorter path to Weggis, and the nearer prospect of fire and good cheer at the Lion d'Or, were attractions more powerful than even the budding charms of the Rose of Lyndhurst.

Far from tedious was the descent to our travelers. Traveling companions made themselves agreeable, and the guide had many an anecdote or legend to relate. Nor did he omit the tradition of the fountain of the three sisters, who, fleeing from the pursuit of a wicked Austrian bailiff, found refuge in these cliffs, their retreat unknown, themselves forgot, until

on one bright noontide three stars arose above the mountain and stood still, filling the heavens with their mystic silvery radiance. And here, in the quiet dell they pointed out, the peasants wandering found the sisters together lying at rest forever. And the fountain springing there, then endowed with miraculous powers, is called the Schwesterborn in memory of them.

Twilight was changing into night when the little steamer returning from Fluelen touched at Weggis on its way to Luzern. And as it neared Luzern, the moon in full, unclouded splendor was shining down upon every shadowy bay and rock-bound cove, bathing the mountain-tops in glory, and throwing upon the waters, in yet sterner profile, the dark-browed, fir-crowned promontories. Whiter than the moonlight slope to the water's edge the ramparts of Luzern, the monotony broken by picturesque towers and antique covered bridges.

Dreary and silent at night is Luzern, with its dimly lighted streets and uniformly closed houses. Little sound of passing feet in the deserted squares. Only the ever-restless rushing of the river, and occasional distant tones of music, are heard by our weary ones as they gain the welcome shelter and take possession of the cheerful, comfortable apartments of the Cheval Blanc.

## VIII.

"Promises are pigmies still, though perched on Alps."

"Ho! for the Pilate!" cheered Harry May, as next morning the steamer from Luzern rounded the bend of the lake here broadening across to the base of the Righi, which rises opposite in proud preëminence over the surrounding shores.

And in the stern presence of the Pilate the boat touched at the village of Wergiswyl, brilliant in its array of cottages many-hued, encircled by neat gardens, nestling in whitening orchards, or in vineyards glowing with the faint purple light of ripening clusters.

Wergiswyl was in holiday mood. It was the fête of some patron saint, and throngs of peasants in holiday attire poured into the chapel erected upon the declivity of a hill, the white walls, rustic porch, and golden cross surmounting all, gleaming out prettily enow amid the massy shade and fawn-colored trunks of a clump of maples.

No one to be found within the precincts of the inn save an ancient crone for whom the charms of high days and holidays had doubtless long since departed with her own. She, rousing from a half doze in her arm-chair close beside the great stove filling up one

side of the kitchen, gave the information that besides the fête a grand wedding was going on—Marie Muller, the pride of Wergiswyl, really to marry the young miller at last. He would not stay for kilt-gang nor for carnival, not he—nor even for a Monday wedding. “‘A bird in the hand,’ and as her old grandmother is dead and gone at last—ach! it seems but the other day when she was married in the self-same chapel, and I her bridesmaid—and now, weh mir, a stranger is Gelbe to her granddaughter, and here am I, all doubled up with the rheumatism.”

The old crone began to sway herself back and forward moaningly, and Falkenstein, seeing a shade darken Margaret's brow, hastened to make the demand for horses. No, certainly, there were no horses in the master's absence. But the strangers might wait here, or out in the garden, where they could see the wedding procession as it came forth.

Of course, the garden was the choice.

Margaret lingered an instant at the door, with a silver piece burning in her hand, and a word of comfort on her lips and in her eye, for the lonely old creature. But the silver piece returned to her purse, the word of comfort gave place to a shy, unnoticed glance of admiration, as she saw that what she waited behind the others to do unperceived, another had done before her. Count Zalkiewski stood with his back to her, but she could see the faint light flickering across that withered face as he bent reverently down, with speech as valuable—well, almost as valuable, as the gold over which the bony fingers clenched, and to which in an instant more the eager eyes had fallen. Margaret moved softly away.

"Come and help us, Margaret," cried Alice as her sister made her way into the garden, "we're all in a perfect whirl of peasant weddings, and not a little embarrassed between Lichtgetreu, and Stubetegetreu, Dorfen, and Kiltgang."

"Mercy!" Margaret exclaimed, while Count Falkenstein interposed.

"Miss Ross is perhaps more familiar with the English courtship, which all these words express with different attendant customs in the different cantons."

"Oh! But speaking of weddings, what meant that old woman's lament that she could not be Gelbe?" Margaret asked of Count Zalkiewski.

"The Gelbe or Yellow woman," he replied, "is the old woman who is mistress of ceremonies, attends the bride to church, removes from her brow the bridal wreath after the ceremony, and during the merry-making following, which the bridegroom begins by dancing three times with the bride, takes that wreath and the bridegroom's bouquet, submitting both to the ordeal by fire, to augur, by their manner of burning, the happiness or misery the future has in store. And——"

And a sound of mingled voices, and adown the chapel hill streamed the procession. In observance of an ancient custom, foremost and alone walked the bride, resplendent in rustling silks. A rustic costume, immense stomacher of rich brocade, square, velvet, silver-broidered collar, with massive silver chains crossing from the corners behind, and passing under the arms to the front. The fair, abundant hair, woven in long braids, was adorned by a huge bouquet. The dress, rich in itself, and graceful on her slender

figure, was lightened by the full white sleeves confined with ribbons at the elbow. Next followed, one by one, the bridesmaids, in costume somewhat similar, but of materials generally less rich. But what alteration soever in the dress, still the inevitable bouquet rising in stately fashion up from the back of the head.

Then came relatives and friends, two by two, and at the inn met the bridegroom and his party, who by another approach arrived at the same goal. These presented the appearance of so many ambulatory bouquets, each bearing aloft an umbrella literally covered with garlands.

As soon as a hearing was possible amid the strains of music and the merry congratulations of friends, our travelers sought out the landlord and speedily obtained the horses in request.

And, turning upon the mountain-side to take a last lingering look down upon the Wergiswyl, they soon forgot its music and its merriment in the mournful glories of Pilatus, as the echoes forgot those glad tones, dwelling only in these heights upon those sounds, the distant lowing of the cattle, or the tinkling of their bells far off in hidden glens, the cry of some lone bird disturbed in its resting-place in yonder pines and fluttering with heavy wing away until it seems but a speck upon the clear blue sky, the ripple of a mountain brook, the whirring of the summer insects in the flowers, sounds so impressive of solitude and stillness that they might seem the whisper of silence, asserting her right supreme among these heights.

Memory's echoes chime in with those around.

Margaret, as Count Falkenstein rides beside her, gayer and more amusing because he is beside her, hears rather a deep voice growing softer in speaking to an aged peasant woman.

"After noontide, the clouds which had traversed the east  
Half the day, gathered closer and rose and increased ;  
The air changed and chilled ; as though out of the ground  
There crept up the trees a confused, hissing sound ;  
And the wind rose. The guides snuffed like chamois, the air,  
And looked at each other, and halted, and there  
Unbuckled the cloaks from their saddles."

That was ere the twilight fell, turning into a dull, impenetrable gray the silvery mists that had risen densely from the valleys, rendering the descent of the Pilate perfectly impracticable.

All hope of reaching Wergiswyl, the destined sojourn for the night, was past. Around the evening camp-fire, built where an overhanging rock afforded shelter from the dews, were exchanged regrets for the loss of those wedding festivities now in full tide at the inn ; and—

"Will there be a supper? O dear! how hungry I am!" cried Alice.

"Pigmies are pigmies still, though perched on Alps,"

Mr. More quoted sententiously.

"At all events, I for one prefer pigmies to pyramids, sepulchres full of dead men's bones. No, Mamma," in reply to a suggestion from Mrs. Ross. "I'll not quite starve before to-morrow morning, perhaps, and we had better keep our provisions for breakfast. As Hans intimates, the morning fog, though as thick is not as strong an Alpenstock or staff of life as porridge. Though there is one thing about pyramids



that I like," she said, recurring to Mr. More. "They are so delightfully mysterious and——"

"Hollow. Space within all mysteries whether of place or of life, for the concealment of ghastly secrets like your dead mens' bones," Falkenstein replied, looking full and angrily upon Count Zalkiewski, who, his arm resting on the tree against which Margaret sat, listened with bent head to her low speech.

He met the look with another so haughty that Falkenstein, irritated beyond measure, spoke again, and this time with marked emphasis:

"They veil themselves from the light who fear it. As pyramids shelter in vales their devious ways, and the grinning skeleton in their dark places."

A merry remark or two was made upon the quaint conceit. But Count Zalkiewski's eyes flashed fire, and his lips curled as he muttered between his set teeth words that to Margaret's astonishment sounded strangely like "puppy's impertinence." She glanced around hastily, but not having recognized the bark, and discovering no evidence of puppyism within the assembled circle—Harry on one knee beside Mrs. Ross, arranging her shawls with tender solicitude; Mr. Ross and Mr. Lynde deep in British politics; Falkenstein leaning on his elbow at Alice's feet, surrounded by the Baroness, Mr. More, and Rose Lynde, in gay conclave—she concluded herself mistaken in Zalkiewski's remark, and innocently inquired what he had said. At that instant Rose's voice called upon her:

"Miss Ross, *don't* you want to hear a story? I've learned by heart every one of our Lancashire tales of fairy, witch and ghost; and I love them far better than

any novel. And since Count Falkenstein says these mountains have been the haunt of pigmies from time immemorial, and confesses to having this morning heard a legend of this same Pilatus, don't you think he is in duty bound to tell it us?"

"I do indeed. Count Falkenstein, you surely can not refuse."

"I——"

"Now," Rose interrupted, "I protest this way of proceeding will never do in the world. Here we are to-night, as completely isolated by this great sea of fog as ever was Crusoe on his sea-girt island. Suppose, then, being beyond the reach of any known principalities and powers, we were to have a queen of our own—one who shall reign after the absolute monarch-of-all-I-survey fashion. All who vote for Miss Ross, hold up their hands," she cried suddenly, raising her own.

Instantly all were up, save Count Falkenstein's. His followed more slowly as the Baroness clapped her hands, and gave the shout, "Vive la reine Marguerite!"

And "long live the Queen!" astonished all those republican cliffs that kept on repeating it in faint tones of wondering expostulation, as Margaret said.

A long spray of ground-ivy clambered up the rock. In a moment Harry had twined it into a rude chaplet, and, advancing, dropped it now on Margaret's brow. Very graceful it was, resting there, the glossy tendrils mingling with the gleaming waves of her hair. And very graceful, very lovely she, her heightened color and downcast lashes lit up by the blazing fire, as, when Harry had dropped on one knee before

her and raised her hand to his lips, swearing in set terms fealty to his liege lady. Count Zalkieswki came forward and followed his example.

Very much provoked with Harry for thus occasioning this breach of English etiquette, Margaret yet felt that a protest against that which so obviously was within the bounds of foreign etiquette, would be a ridiculous excess of prudery. So she did not suffer annoyance to render her manner less gracious than became her sovereign ladyship, as one by one the gentlemen thus swore allegiance. Mr. Ross had caught Margaret's quick glance, and, understanding it, was next after Count Zalkiewski, and followed by Mr. Lynde. Count Falkenstein last. If, however, he had wished to pique Margaret, he failed, for she did not observe his tardiness.

"And now," she said, as he resumed his place at Alice's feet, "our armies swore terribly in Flanders," but nothing to this, if you all have sworn in sober verity. Are you not each and all bound on your honor as gentlemen to obey unquestioningly my every command to-night?"

"On my honor as a gentleman." Only one voice silent in this general asseveration, but the silence unnoted.

"Take care," she returned, with mock gravity. "Think, each of you, how strange and how capricious an absolute sovereign's will may be. And more especially, a lady sovereign's. Weigh well, I beseech you, your decision, ere you speak again. For I shall hold you to it. And now, what say you, leal subjects all? An absolute or a limited monarchy?"

"Ugh! C'est fait d'eux!" cried the Baroness,

shrugging her graceful shoulders. "Are you not contente," turning to Alice, "that it is not but the messieurs who do this vow? There is a je ne sais quoi of portent in the figure so serious of our queen. She amuses herself to play the majestic, mais, messieurs, gare, gare!"

Margaret's throne meanwhile established, she turned to Count Falkenstein with an arch smile.

"To queen it every inch," she said, "we command our trusty subject to give us *that* legend."

He bowed without a glance, and after an instant's pause obeyed:

"It is the Lady Magdalena, and she sits there on yonder rock, while shriek the fierce winds by, echoing Pilate's shriek long ages gone that echoed here from cliff to cliff. Far down, where the mists, the darkened waves' gray foam, whirl and eddy, Pilate's Lake shivers 'in the briered dell below.' For Pilate's wraith, dark-shrouded on the mountain's brow, has donned his judgment-cap of clouds, and thunders forth the sentence a knell henceforth forever to his soul.

"It is the lovely Lady Magdalena, and her golden hair," his eyes rested slowly upon Alice, "floats upon the wind like a wavering moonbeam on the night. And her voice rings clear and low amid the rushing storm, like elfin-bells tolling the death of the summer day.

"Nay, but Alois, I love thee not!"

"That know I right well, lady," answers sadly he of the shining coat of mail, bending before her until the eagle plume upon the casque which he has doffed, sweeps the ground.

"That know I all too well, and therefore come I not to-night seeking love, but showing my liege lady

how her commands have been obeyed ; seeking new commands and beseeching her gage for the coming combat.'

" 'And the white rosebuds from the Garden of Love which thou sayest the great Dragon guards perpetually from the grasp of men, scattering instead the blood-red passion-flowers without the gates ?'

" 'They are thine, lady. See, so long have I borne them on my heart, that a drop of blood burns upon that thorn. Nay, let me bind them round thine arm. The thorns shall not hurt *thee*.'

"Neither consenting nor refusing, she suffers him to wreath those velvet buds round the wrist, whiter than the creamy petals beside the single crimson drop upon the now harmless out-turned thorn. And without one word of hope, yet not altogether hopeless, he bows before her and is gone.

"She does not care to watch him, but her gaze follows absently as she rises, moving on her homeward path. And lo ! where he late knelt in manly, loving reverence, in open homage and sworn fealty, another stands. It seems he is a gallant knight, one of proud bearing, certainly, and noble presence. It seems his armor shines out bright, and stained by no thick blood from muddy veins. It seems yon is the flash of knightly sword in his firm grasp. It seems, for a heavy mist has veiled the form. And behind its mysterious shadows, who can distinguish between the flash of knightly steel and the gleam of gems priceless, yet, oh ! surely, baser ?

"Pilate thunders, and Pilate's thunders die ; mists gather, and winds scatter them forever : months come and go, and their footprints are trodden away by those that hurry after.

"But those rosebuds, long since twined around the Lady Magdalena's arm are not dead, not faded, though crushed they are and broken, as she pressed above them a massive jeweled bracelet which she strives with lingering fingers to secure.

"She has risen from yonder rock, and stands before it proudly. The winds are shrieking, ghosts of echoes ages dead. Far down, where mists, the darkened waters' foam, are whirling, Pilate's Lake shivers 'in the briered dell below.'

"Upon the wind the Lady Magdalena's loosened tresses flash like lightning through the night. And her voice is trembling like the waters' swell as she murmurs, touching flowers and gems:

"'There is not room for both upon my wrist.'

"He to whom she speaks, he whom she knows beside her, though she looks not up, the mist-veiled knight, responds with slow emphasis:

"'There is not room for both.'

"Her eyes are misty as she turns and gazes, her hand wavers, the clasp of the jeweled bracelet is entangled in the flower-stems—one movement, and they are broken asunder.

"They are gone. Whither that chill blast hath borne them, she can not see in the darkness. Only the diamonds flash out there, reflecting, it would seem, the baleful lightning-glare.

"One instant, and she——"

He paused. All eyes were turned upon him, but very coolly he resumed his segar, puffing away as though the lovely Lady Magdalena's fate lay not in his hands.

"Are you not going to give us the end?" Margaret asked in wonderment.

"The end? That do I not know," he answered, fixing his eyes upon her.

"How provoking!" began Alice—and his sister said:

"Well, Max, it must me tell that you have made us shudder to very little purpose with your lightnings and mists and thunders, your veiled knights and other diablerie. But, n'en déplaie, you have not improved the traditionary legend. The Lady Magdalena is the peasant maiden Magdalena; Alois the knight, Alois the shepherd; the knight of mists, a green-clad elf, with one little beard of silver sweeping down to his little chamois boots; and the diamond bracelet that he bore, a great golden cheese. En outre, the spirit of the stories is so different! Falsehood in this, truth in the other."

"Not falsehood," he returned, smoking on in lazy indifference. "The lovely Lady Magdalena had not pledged herself, had scarcely received passively the votive roses. And diamonds outgleam heart's blood, you will allow. And mistily romantic knights may mystify——"

"Je vous baise les mains," she cried laughing, "but spare us a moral dissertation. Allons, Marguerite, mamié, may you not command one little tale, one pretty history of the good and the true, to banish this bête noire of Max's fancy?"

"On whom shall I call?" asked Margaret.

Count Zalkiewski had all this while stood with bowed head at her side, but he now advanced, throwing himself on the rock before her, with a defiant, steady gaze on Falkenstein.

"Upon me, liege lady," he replied, "and may Madame la Baronne judge of the truth of my story.

"It was in a hovel that they parted, those two who are so near and yet so far. In a squalid, poverty-stricken hovel, at the cold, dark midnight hour, years ago. They clung to each other then, and they dreamed not of the years to come between them. But they came and went, those dreary years, and they met again. Wearily yet steadily he had toiled upward through life's journey, and now stood upon the summit of that mountain whither gentle hands and loving had led her dancing feet. Wearily he had toiled up, and wearily stood there, looking in her bright eyes for one smile of recognition and of comfort. And she—she turned to watch the mazes of the dance, to hearken to the mirthful voices, to rejoice in the sunshine and the gladness. Let it be. Year crowds on year, life crowds on life, and there must be some dimmed links in the great chain of eternity."

There was silence. A chill had fallen over all, and they sat looking toward him for explanation. He, meantime, had never moved his eyes from the Baroness Waldien's face. Raising hers slowly at last, she met his gaze, and responded to it with fretful impatience, while she shivered as with cold.

"A dismal sketch, Herr Count, mais, à quoi bon? For what should one break the heart in looking back at the darkness left behind? The world cares not for the hovel in the valley when it stands by the palace on the mountain's brow. Ni moi non plus. Thousand thanks, Monsieur, and you, my Max, but I think in truth you might have been less dismal, considering time and place." And shivering still, she drew nearer to the cheerful firelight.

No one spoke at first. All felt in Zalkiewski's thrill-



ing tones that his story had its meaning for himself. And all felt, as they saw the shade upon the Baroness's brow, and marked her gesture of vexation, that it called up some unpleasant memory to her.

Zalkiewski rose presently, and lighting a segar, strolled away out of sight. At least so Margaret thought, but her attention was quickly in demand by Mr. Lynde, who possessed himself of the place the Count's defection had left vacant.

"Our story-tellers have called up none but the 'blue spirits,' it would seem, Miss Ross."

"And quite left out the 'mingle, mingle, ye who mingle may,'" she responded, catching at his reference.

"Yet this of all others is the occasion demanding that mingling. Why, you actually are blue yourself, and I have seen you shiver twice. I do not doubt you see Pilate's Lake with its shrinking waves down through yonder gray fog beneath that cliff."

She smiled faintly as, following the direction to which he pointed, her eyes fell upon a solitary figure half in shadow.

"Aha! I knew it. This will not do. If we do not get up a laugh——"

"A laugh?" exclaimed Margaret. "But we can not laugh to order."

"Can not you? Listen."

Listen she did perforce, however, at this moment, to a summons which Alice came across from her mother to deliver. And when, again at leisure, a quarter of an hour after, she heard Alice's gay laughter beside Mr. Lynde, she stole away from the now lively circle to listen to her own tumultuous thoughts.

She was leaning, beyond the red glare of the fire, over the brink of the precipice where the cool fog flung against her brow. Without a single reason, she averred to herself, she felt cold and comfortless as that fog, and she seemed to see an indefinable drear mistiness closing in around her.

Presently a voice startled her. How long she had been there apart she knew not, but she saw now that the merry group was scattered from before the fire, and that silence had fallen there. She half rose, but that voice startled her—not only by its near neighborhood—for the speaker must have been beside the rock concealing her—but by the icy sternness of its tones.

"I have interpreted your legend, Count Falkenstein, and understood your every word this evening. Am I right in my conclusion that words and legend were insults offered to me?"

"Most obviously right. If my speech were somewhat obscure, I remembered who was present. If it strikes you not clearly now, I believe I must add to my definition of adventurer and impostor, that of——"

Falkenstein began hotly and continued with a sneer. He had misconstrued the calmness of his opponent, whose haughty gesture now staid further insult on his lips. It was needless.

"Enough," Zalkiewski said quietly. "I am but a fool to throw away life in a fool's quarrel, but so be it. I reckon not. We meet, Count Falkenstein, the third day from the morrow, if it so please you. That is, I believe, the earliest date which can be fixed upon after the return to Schwyz."

Falkenstein bowed. But before he could utter a

word, swift and silent, and pale as an apparition, glided Margaret from out her hiding-place before them.

Not one word she uttered, but she lifted her clasped hands in mute appeal.

Count Zalkiewski bowed and would have passed on, but quick as thought she caught his arm.

"What is all this?" she demanded. "Nay, you shall not evade me, shall not deny me! Count Falkenstein, Count Zalkiewski, you are my father's guests as well upon this mountain height as in his native halls—and is this feud between his guests a meet return for hospitality?"

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle. Count Falkenstein and I have no more words. The feud is adjusted as we both would wish."

She looked from one to the other as he spoke. Falkenstein had coldly bowed, and stood withdrawn, watching with a supercilious smile.

She wrung her hands.

"I am no eavesdropper, and I did not hear your words," she said; "but I am not blind, and I see too well all is not right. O Count Falkenstein! *you* will listen to me," and she turned to him, her face flushing and her voice trembling in her eagerness; "*you* will not hear me entreat in vain."

"Mademoiselle, this is scarcely a woman's province," he replied.

"A woman's province!" She stamped her foot involuntarily. "A woman's province is to clap her white hands on her delicate ears, and glide softly away with downcast eyes, that she may not hear the angry words, may not see the shedding of blood, forsooth! A woman's province! Count Falkenstein, I

will speak. You have challenged Count Zalkiewski."

"Pardon me, lady, Count Zalkiewski has challenged me."

Her color went and came with rapid change. She breathed hard and clenched her hand upon her bosom, struggling for composure. Zalkiewski flashed an angry glance on Falkenstein, and with a muttered "fool!" strode to her side. Falkenstein started forward, dismayed at the effect of his words.

"Mademoiselle," Zalkiewski said soothingly, "you agitate yourself unnecessarily for a few rash words. Forget them. Words are but air, and madmen only seek to grasp them."

She fixed her eyes wistfully upon him. But she could not read the unwavering firmness with which he met them. Suddenly they kindled as with some new thought.

She extended her hand to Falkenstein. He lifted it gallantly to his lips; and leaving it in his clasp, she spoke:

"It is scarce an hour since two gentlemen swore upon their honor as gentlemen to obey a certain lady's every command this evening. They can not have forgotten that."

An embarrassed silence, which she broke after an instant impetuously:

"They were warned, twice warned, and swore again."

"You mistake, I —" Falkenstein began, but stopped, while a flush of shame stole across his brow.

"And they can not, can not withdraw now," she continued, not noticing the interruption; "they dare

not break a pledge, albeit lightly made, which, when made, within their heart of hearts they meant to keep. They dare not forfeit that, because they thought nothing would be exacted. Nay, but I will exact!"

"Ungenerous!" Count Zalkiewski said in a tone of unconcealed annoyance, as she turned toward him, a faint smile fluttering on her lips.

"Your hand, Count Zalkiewski," she demanded, heedless of his ejaculation.

"Mademoiselle, you know not what you ask," he answered sternly. "You dare not, for a mere whim, for a thoughtless promise, a rashly-pledged honor, force me to forfeit honor indeed. My word is given to Count Falkenstein, and that word I must keep to the death. You will not ask me to break that."

"I will and I dare. Mine was the first firm promise. Your hand, Count Zalkiewski."

She trembled as though the blast that swept around had power to shake her, and her voice quivered in every accent. But she met his stern eyes unshrinkingly.

"Mademoiselle, I will not. Your right hand is in the friendly grasp of one who has this night heaped upon me unprovoked insult—insult that I can not forget, and will not forgive."

She turned to Falkenstein, a frown upon her brows. She spoke aside to him, at first hurriedly and angrily, and then more gently as his replies were calmer.

"What do you gain by compliance?" she repeated at last. "For shame, Count Falkenstein! You gain the sense of right—for well you know that insult offered Count Zalkiewski were injustice. You keep your promise. You gain, and firmly, my poor friend-

ship, on which you seem to set some store. Come! You will hesitate no longer."

Falkenstein advanced a few paces, and said in cold, reluctant tones.

"Count Zalkiewski, since Miss Ross numbers you among her friends, I regret my words this evening; I retract, and apologize for them. Will that do?" he added, scarcely lower, to Margaret.

Count Zalkiewski raised his head proudly. He had stood apart, with folded arms and haughty bearing, awaiting the result of this colloquy.

"And since Miss Ross has chosen to lay such stress upon a thoughtless pledge of mine," he said, "I can not do otherwise than accept that apology."

He turned away among the rocks, unmindful of Margaret's half entreating gesture of detention.

Falkenstein watched him with a mocking smile.

"Beim Teufel," he muttered, "but he carries a high head, for all the adventurer I could swear he is. Mademoiselle," he said aloud, "are you not proud of your achievement—oil upon the troubled waters, etc., etc.?"

"The troublesome waters," she amended, wearily suppressing a yawn. "And after all, I don't know that it is not an oleaginous expenditure on a tempest in a tea-pot. 'The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb,'" she quoted, as she said good-night.

"The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb." It staid some words upon his lips while he kissed her hand, releasing it.

## IX.

"To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new."

"MARGARET ! Margaret ! where are you, I say ? Where are we all ? And what is that ?" cried Alice, starting to her feet and rubbing her half-shut eyes as at early dawn, clear and loud through defiles intervening, echoed the distant Alpine horn, startling her into wakefulness.

And as the changes rang out loud and louder, and then died away through distant wavering mists, the low and solemn tones were caught up by voices near at hand—two voices, repeating with joyous and yet solemn confidence the "Praise God the Lord."

Instinctively Margaret sank upon her knees. Alice had stopped in the midst of a yawn, and even the giddy Baroness, raising herself on her elbows listened in reverent silence.

"What is it ?" Rose Lynde asked in an awe-struck whisper, when the voices ceased as suddenly.

"It came like an angel's message in these solitudes," said Alice, looking round somewhat fearfully in the gray uncertain light.

"Voilà your angels," laughed the Baroness, when with a shout and a halloo Hans and his fellow-guide sprang out from behind a rock and flung themselves

from crag to crag, in pursuit of a horse that had broken loose from his tether during the night, and was now leisurely following the path down the mountain, perchance with a reminiscence of yesterday's breakfast at the inn-stable.

In default of to-day's breakfast at the inn below, the travelers were soon partaking of a repast somewhat more dainty than plentiful, served up of yesterday's superabundance upon a rocky table which Margaret had garnished with such profusion of the wild flowers gleaming here in every crevice, that Harry gravely requested a wing of the Alpenrosen before her.

Margaret found herself by accident placed between the quondam hostile Counts. She glanced from the fiery restlessness of the one to the proud unmovedness of the other, and bethought herself of an ancient half-forgotten rhyme of "feather-bed 'twixt iron wall and heavy brunt of cannon-ball," which she was convinced must have been written with reference to herself. Falkenstein was all attention to her, and she feared to give more than that first glance to her silent companion until, as the general conversation turned upon the strange echoes and the angel message, he joined in without embarrassment.

"You forget," he said, "that we are very near the regions of 'the pious Unterwalder' of Swiss proverb. Every canton has its distinguishing feature, and Unterwalden its Alpine horn, the shepherd's call to prayer at early morn and eve, when he enters one of the many chapels rising amid the cliffs for his especial use, or kneels where the hour finds him beneath the dome of the Great Temple."

"And shall we leave Unterwalden, perhaps the



Forest Cantons, like so many travelers, with too desultory a glance to recognize the distinctive features of which you speak? Now I for one am utilitarian enough to be interested in Swiss dairies," said Mrs. Ross.

The guide from Wergiswyl, who prided himself upon his knowledge of the English language, actually did comprehend the pith of her speech—Swiss dairies—and hastened to inform her that he could do the honors of one lying almost in the path to Wergiswyl.

"And da is Siste and Ziege to the best," he added hungrily.

Mrs. Ross smiled.

"The Siste and Ziege are two most interesting features of the case, beyond doubt, my good fellow. Well, we'll put it to the vote. Who would study manners and customs this morning? Or, to put it more plainly—to eat cheese or not to eat cheese? that is the question."

A question very readily decided in the affirmative by a host of half-breakfasted wanderers. And, once more mounted, they follow gayly in the wake of the guides.

Margaret and Count Falkenstein rode on side by side. Silently they rode at first, for Margaret was looking her farewell to the dark-blue Righi, from whose brow the sun had not lifted the veil—looking her farewell to the lake of the four Forest Cantons, lying crimson-flushing in the arms of those guardian mountains, Righi and Pilatus—looking her farewell back upon the far-distant white walls of Luzern, and nearer, upon the gray battlements of last night's refuge.

The cliffs were broken now by long slopes and tiny glens of verdure, where the brilliant flowers, erewhile flinging themselves unseen from cliffs and crevices, or clinging to the gaunt gray rock, glowed in vivid brilliance through the grass. There resounded the tinkle of a cow-bell and the lowing of cattle browsing in sleek content beside the frequent rivulet. And now, descending by a steep path trampled by that herd, where a waterfall leaped after with no little clamor, our travelers gained a sheltered nook where, in midst of a plateau trodden into miry clay by a multitude of hoofs, was reared the *châlet* or *Sennehutte*, the goal of their pilgrimage.

This, however picturesque it may have appeared from a distance, the plashing waterfall beside, the grassy heights above, mossy rocks towering around like ancient ivy-mantled ruins, was at a nearer view very, very un-*châlet*-like, and most prosaically ugly. Built of logs notched at the ends to fit into each other, and the roof of great shingles kept in place by heavy stones, its only adornments were glimpses of cloudless blue let in mosaic-wise through the airy roof.

The *Senne* himself, a corpulent, jolly, middle-aged peasant, stood in the doorway to give his visitors hearty welcome, and then escorted them into the principal apartment.

A long, low room with blackened rafters crossing it—blackened, for in its centre a fire-place, a cavity paved with stones, sent forth its smoke, to find an egress as best it might, and it laid a grimy touch here and there in clambering to that opening above in the roof. Fixed upon two poles hang the milk-pails, and on that bench is a butter-tub and a great bucket of

whew which is drunk instead of water. In whey, too, are the milking utensils washed, and a wheyey odor about a certain garment hung against the wall without, to dry in the sunshine, gives rise to a strange suspicion. There is a long table upon which, sweeping aside various dippers, spoons, and ladles, and the large tub which receives the milk until the foam settles, the hospitable Senne spreads his simple repast, and his guests make acquaintance with the various preparations by boiling, curdling, etc., and wax enthusiastic over the merits of Suffi, Schotte, Siste—all the changes of a Senne's meals.

They watch the Senne as he stands over the huge copper cauldron suspended above the fire, where he is warming the milk for cheese, and, putting in the rennet, stirs until all is curdled. And then when he has dipped up and drained the curds, they follow him into the milk-room. In this, dark and semi-subterranean, Margaret had light thrown upon a subject of previous wonderment to her, namely, why the Senne had not built rather upon the alp above—when she saw the clear stream from the waterfall flowing through here, keeping all so fresh and cool.

A peep at the sky-light sleeping-floor above, with its accommodations of fragrant hay, did not, however, awaken unfavorable comparison with those of the night before. And after a duty-inspection of the trio of prime pigs fattening in a third apartment, the visitors strolled off, accompanied in their setting-out by the talkative Senne.

At the foot of the steep where foamed and eddied the fountain in a thousand rainbow hues, and then gurgled away over green moss and shining pebbles

to its dairy duties in the Senner hut, Margaret paused and turned as cliff upon cliff opened a vista of wooded hollows, of sudden gorges, and, perched aloft, like a great, green bough flung midway between sky and earth, a pasture whence came a far-off echo of bells, as cattle ranged in undistinguishable blurs of white or dark across it.

"Ah!" she cried, "that is just the site for castles in the air! Away with châteaux en Espagne! I'll build up there, all among the elves, and where Pilate shall lift his cap to me every bright good-morrow."

The Senne had regarded her very seriously the while.

"But, mein Fräulein," he hastened to interpose, "you can not build your castle there. I say nothing of its being so bleak and lonely the winter long to a young lady like yourself. But neighbor Johann Schwarz has pastured his herds up there these twenty years come midsummer, and he is not likely, for all the heavy cheeses come and gone, to sell the best alp in the mountains round."

"What!" exclaimed Alice; "you do not mean that all those handfuls of grass belong to any, but chamois and the birds of the air?"

"Ganz gewiss, Fräulein; there is not a tuft in all these cantons which is not portioned out either to communes or individuals. And that to which the lady refers is among the best of our high-alps, our highest verdure-clad heights, where though the cows can remain but for three summer weeks, yet there the pasture is finest of all. Now this alp of mine"—and he looked round with a landed-proprietor air—"here I can keep my cattle seven or eight weeks, for it lies

lower, you see. Lower, and perhaps not so good for milch cows; but after all, one may make that up in the care of the cheese—one may make that up in care and skill."

Whereupon followed the anticipated compliment upon the products of his dairy, and then Mrs. Ross inquired if from three to eight weeks were all the time the alps were in use.

"The high-alps, lady. But down below, at the base, we pasture on the fore-alps, some weeks before and after."

"And then your work is over for the year?"

"Then comes the fête, and we return to our valley homes. We have work enough down there, what with spinning, silk-carding, wood-carving, and what not; and our youths return to the village schools, where the good curés have enough to do to bring back the learning lost in the long summer months on the mountains."

"And how long before you are off to the mountains again?"

"When the snow melts, and the green grass beckons us up. You know our proverb, gracious lady, 'No April so good that each hedge has not its hat.' But the Faun soon clears a pathway for us."

"The Faun? What is that?"

"Not know the Faun?" and he glanced at Mrs. Ross, as who should say, "argues thyself unknown," while he explained:

"The Faun is a hot wind from the south, blowing often in one current during an entire week, and it dries up the snow as fast as elfin ban the greenest pastures. Wirklich, it melts more in a single day

than the sun in seven. It is so warm that buds sometimes come forth to meet the spring, and frisch! here has winter gathered them all in his cold grasp presently. Besides, the Faun can rage so wildly that we dare not light a fire for fear of houseburning, and last year it carried off half the roofs in Wergiswyl."

"And the avalanches, are you in no danger here from those?" asked Margaret.

"From avalanches in time of snow, and landslides after heavy rains. Sapperlot! a landslide beats the devil at his own game of getting us down below. Why, I myself was once dug out of one three days deep."

"Oh! tell me about it!" Margaret cried eagerly.

"Come, come, Margaret," remonstrated her father.

"See, your mother is already half-way up the steep, and every one is mounted. It will not do to keep them waiting."

"Hans will wait for me, papa," she pleaded. "Do go, papa. We can overtake you in ten minutes. Hark! there is mamma calling."

"Only a moment then, child," he said as he rode away, while Margaret turned again to the Senne.

"Do tell me your story. I have staid on purpose to hear it." And she seated herself upon a crag jutting out over the rivulet.

"It was many a year ago, Fräulein. I was a young man then, and a sturdy, and reckoned the finest hand at the cross-bow and the best shot among the mountains. So said the neighbors round, and I, as young madcap, gloried above all things in that which so nearly proved my ruin. But you shall judge.

"One night, it was in the summer season, and as twi-

Light fell, I had just returned to my hut on a distant alp upon this very mountain, with a fine chamois thrown across my shoulders. I had flung it down within the threshold, and was stooping over, feeling the fat upon the ribs and thinking of the feast I would make upon the morrow, and how I would boast over all the lads of this, my hundredth shot within the year. For you must know, Fräulein, that for all I am getting stout and cumbrous now," looking down complacently upon his robust, well-knit frame, "mine was as light a foot, as sure and fleet, as ever pursued chamois up the heights where he clambered and thought himself secure, standing there as though defying pursuit. So that through all the Forest Cantons I was nicknamed The Chamois' Evil Genius. •

"Well, there I stood, almost burying my fingers in the creature's fat, thinking of the praises at the morrow's feast, seeing beforehand the applauding eyes, and especially one pair as bright and blue as heaven, and laughing as I cried aloud, 'The Chamois' Evil Genius!' when, hussasa! horridoh! with the tramp of a thousand hoofs, down swept from the heights above—what, I did not then know, but it was an army of slaughtered chamois, all the chamois I had slain from early boyhood. And they trampled and tore the cliff above until it tottered and shook and fell, crashing down the mountain side, and ere I could raise myself again it had flung itself around, before, above, building me in a mighty grave.

"I will not speak of my consternation, of my frantic efforts at escape, nor of my despair when they were all in vain. Hours were days to me, and days were years. My fire had died out long ago, and I lay be-

side the dead embers, waiting in sullen apathy for the warmth of life to die out too.

"It was toward the close of the third day, as I learned afterward, that I heard a faint, low rumbling sound, I thought of distant earthquake. So stupefied and so indifferent now, it failed to rouse me for a single instant, until there came a prolonged shout, an agony of anxiety in every tone, which I thought then would have quickened me in any tomb. Instantly I sprang up, replying with a shout which startled my own ears with its sudden power; and groping for my spade, knocking away with it a rafter, to work I went in the direction of that voice. Soon it drew near and nearer, and anon, as the spades let in the blessed sunset light, I was welcomed by that voice and a score of others.

"You raised your pretty brows a while ago, Fräulein, when I told of the phantom herd trampling down with spirit-hoofs that slide of earth. I, too, until the voice of my life chid, awe-struck, my mocking words.

"'Gottlieb,' she said solemnly, laying one hand on my lips to stay the scoff, and pointing with the other above, where an inaccessible jagged peak seemed to brush against the skies, 'canst thou say no Alpenrosen bloom, no wild hay grows green and withers there aloft? And canst thou say of the regions of the Unseen, which thy wisdom's eye may not attain, 'this is,' or 'this is not'? Listen to my vision three nights past.

"'Thou knowest, my Gottlieb, how I stood in the doorway of my hut and gayly waved a last farewell as thou turnedst, looking back for it, where the path is lost among the cliffs below. Full of glad thoughts



I was, and of proud ones too, as I too turned to look back, but farther than thou, even toward the far cliff where I had seen thee stand that evening, while thy rifle rang out so sharply and the chamois dropped dead at thy feet. I gazed, and presently I brushed my hand across my eyes, if perchance some cobweb from the leafy beech had blown across them, distorting what I looked upon, and looked again. How they trooped adown the mountain-passes, scores on scores of antlers glancing in the reddened sunset! Scores on scores! Down they rushed, faster and faster, down, and passing, oh! so near, where winds the path, you know, a stone's throw off. And as they passed, without a sound save that of flying hoofs, the exultation wherewith I had watched and thought, "My huntsman has another shot to-night, it seems," changed to a pang of deadly fear. I went into the hut and shut the door. For, O Gottlieb! mounted on the foremost chamois, clinging to his neck, a green-coated mountain elf rode on, so swiftly that his silvery beard blended with the white moonbeams through the beeches, as he rode.

"No tangible cobweb had dimmed my sight; but, I reasoned with myself, imagination has her cobwebs dark or bright, and I struggled to be calm. When all at once through the stillness of the twilight fell a fearful crash! Then I knew all."

Gottlieb ended.

The tradition of the Bodensee, where four leagues of bank were undermined by revengeful trout, recurred to Margaret's memory with the lines:

"Und frühe beim Morgenroth  
Der Fischer kommt mit den Flechten;

Am Tage drohet der Tod,  
Die Rache schafft in den Nächten."

"And where is she, the brave maiden of the bright blue eyes?" questioned the eager maiden of the bright blue eyes.

"In God's Acre, Fräulein, down yonder at Wergiswyl."

"You are not married then?" and the bright blue eyes grew dim as she dropped them from his face.

"Hei! what would you have, dear Fräulein? My Sänchen is a good wife, a good mother. And around the cross above *her* she twines the immortelles."

The jovial countenance, saddened by a moment's memory, brightened again as Margaret gave him cordial thanks for his story and his hospitality.

"Perhaps I shall see you to-morrow," he said while she mounted her horse—then explained to the inquiry in her face, "To-morrow, you know, is Tell's Procession, and all the cantons go to Altdorf."

"I too," she responded, nodding farewell. And loosing the bridle, she sped up the steep where Hans awaited.

And not Hans alone. She turned in surprise when Count Falkenstein fell in beside her.

"You here!" she exclaimed, "oh! then you should have been yonder at the fountain, with elves and chamois-ghosts and bright blue eyes."

"Bright blue eyes have been my *ignis fatuus* too long," he muttered. "You were listening," he added gayly, "to some legend, I judged from your interested face, as I kept my eyes on you, and you yours on your peasant. What was it all about?"

"A tale of love and truth, not like yours last night.

And yet," she went on thoughtfully, "a tale of forgetfulness. They are all alike, I suppose."

"All what, Mademoiselle? All tales?"

"Tales, and people, and lives. Hopes die, and we bury them and hang our immortelles above their graves, and turn and go our ways. If a tear dim our eyes, the sun weaves a bow of promise there. If memory whisper in our ear, breezes bring merrily the sound of laughter."

"Hei! what would you have, Mademoiselle? Earth is a graveyard, if you will, but not a dead-house, and we bury the pale, cold forms of lifeless hopes out of sight; and the glowing, living flowers, happy memories springing from their graves, keep their place green. The wayfarer whistles as he trudges on in the path between them, for he thinks of the songs those silent voices sang, and their burden is taken up by the flower-bells. Is not this better than sitting down, a watcher in the dead-house, looking for the lifting of life-weary lids, listening for a sound of those bells fastened to hands that now no more forever may stir to ring the changes upon life?"

"Far better, if one could," she answered slowly; "for me, I fear my eyes would be

'Chained to a ghastly sight,  
The white weird face of the dead.'

Effect of education, perhaps. You know our British graveyards do not bloom like your God's Acre."

"And you leave their great, damp mouldy walls to mould and fungus, to yew and owl and bat and ghost?"

"Ugh! Prospect, retrospect, or introspect, away

with them all! Hans, who are those people, and where are they going?" she asked, changing the subject as the guide on her approach quitted a group of some dozen pedestrians, journeying, Alpenstocks in hand, to Wergiswyl. The olive-brown complexions and tall red caps of the men, and the women's pale classic features, exposed by the mezzaro or white veil thrown over the many-bodkined tresses, were familiar to Margaret as Genoese.

"They are pilgrims to Our Lady of Einsiedlen," Hans replied; and Count Falkenstein, interpreting the expression of her face, said:

"What, is she not of your connaissances? Despite her legend? the which if I relate, will you forget my ungracious story last night, granting plenary indulgence, Madonna, as that Madonna to the suppliants at her shrine? But you may be weary of legends?"

"No. I would be Swiss in Switzerland. All these gray heights, untrod by foot of man, are peopled with shadows of the past. No wonder the valley Swiss can afford to be even prosaically substantial flesh and blood. Go on, please."

"A story of love and truth, Mademoiselle. At all events, that will I make it," he thought.

"Long centuries ago, when Love and Truth were young—long enough ago for Love and Truth to have grown old and imbecile, or at the least *fade* and out of fashion—a youth and maiden stood together all beneath black pines and blacker skies, in the lone mountain-darkened Finsterwald, as twilight closed around. Far down in yonder dell, beyond the roughened lake, red twinkled a light through the chinks of the solitary fisher-hut. The raven, keeping vigil in

the blasted pine above, saw how evermore she fixed her gaze down there, albeit her hand yet lingered in the grasp of her companion's.

"'Meinrad of Hohenzollern,' she made answer, sad and slow, 'how often have I said, as again I say, for the last time, I will not hear thee speak of love? And all because I love thee! Yes, I love thee!'—a flush flitted across her pure, pale brow, as he started in sudden rapture—'I love thee, and will not, by suffering thee to wed an obscure peasant maiden, give thee over to the wrath of the noble Hohenzollern, thy father, the scorn of thy knightly brothers, the mockery of thy proud friends. I love, and will not drag thee from thy castle-halls, an outcast and an alien, the derision of thy lordly house, of the very menials at thy gates.'

"'My sword, I have that still,' he interrupted proudly, laying his disengaged hand upon the hilt.

"She smiled wanly.

"'For what, Lord Meinrad? To slay the trout and carp in the nets of the fisherman my father? To combat the opinion of thy compeers, to do battle with their sneers? Alas! to carve thy fortunes it had need be red gold; the sword of honor hath too fine an edge, and it breaks or is blunted against the harness of this cruel world.'

"'Cruel world with thee, my Hildegarde!'

"'Hear me, Meinrad,' she went on, unmindful of his words. 'With the morrow's dawn I go to Zurich, there to take the holy vows. I must not be thy bride, and I will be none save Heaven's. Nay, seek not to detain me'—for pale and trembling, clasping her hands wildly in both his own, he would have spoken—'my

fate is fixed, and thou knowest I waver not. But before we part,' and she drew from her bosom a tiny image of the Virgin, 'take this and wear it on thy heart, and when thou wearest a wife's within it, think sometimes gently upon Hildegarde, who only wounded thee to spare thee life-long torture, who, dead to thee, is dead to all the world for thee—praying ever for thy happiness by day and night.'

"She has hurriedly withdrawn her hands, she has sprung from cliff to cliff, and she dares not look back or listen as he calls her name, wandering among the unmoved pines in frenzied incertitude, until a moment later brought the plash of oars upon the lake.

"Years came and went, but Truth remained.

"Deep in the desolate heart of the Finsterwald, in a cave of Einsiedlen, the ancient silver-haired and bearded hermit lay, his eyelids closing fast in death. The withered hands were pressed with relaxing clasp upon his breast, where broad and deep a red wound gaped, and blood oozed and trickled downward to the pool beside. Between the palms, clasped still in unconscious tenderness of touch, lay, with its silver chain flung loose across his breast, an image of the Virgin. No sound in the silence save that labored breathing, momentarily faint and fainter, and the boding croak of a raven watching from a blasted pine without.

"The lady abbess paced slowly to and fro the terrace of the blooming convent-garden.

"Here and there were groups of white and black-stoled nuns, who followed with loving, reverent gaze as she walked on alone, through the sunset glory resting as a halo upon her heaven-rapt brow. Her lips were moving and her eyes upraised.

"Suddenly, through the cloudless mezzo-tinted skies, swifter and swifter, until it dropped and quivered cawing at her feet, a dark-winged bird swept onward in unwavering flight. Its shrill, harsh voice seemed to have kept for her some ghostly tone of the dead past, for she flung herself upon her knees beside it, wildly crying some pet name.

"As she raised it in her arms and pressed it to her bosom, a something cold fell there, and looking down, she recognized with a shudder a small image of the Virgin, and a long silver chain clenched in the raven's claws, all dabbled red in blood.

"*'Meinrad, O Meinrad!'* she wailed. And she fell forward as one dead, her face buried in the long thick grass.

"The nuns rushed to her assistance; but just then there came a knocking at the gates, they were flung wide open by unseen hands, and two men with travel-stained garb and pilgrim staves stood there.

"They were bold, bad men, those two. They demanded alms with fierce gestures and menacing words from those terrified sisters, who shrank back farther and farther, until they were gathered, a frightened flock, around their head. They were bold, bad men; they followed, and at sight of that still prostrate form they pushed on rudely. One stooped to grasp her shoulder, but he staggered back with a yell and a muttered curse that froze upon his stiffened lips. For there, fluttering up with one continuous boding caw, the raven rose from that cold, still heart, and waved above the ruffians' heads, to and fro, in view of the crowds now pressing in at the gates, the Virgin's image and its blood-stained chain.

"The raven, the avenger of their midnight crime, has given its name to the inn which rose upon the spot of expiation. And the sweet Saint Hildegarde is living yet, in miracle and legend."

"And is it to her shrine that all these pilgrims repair?"

"A hundred and fifty thousand in a year? No, Mademoiselle. My legend is not yet ended. Will you hear the rest? A matter of history, that is.

"A century and a half later, in the Finsterwald, where Hermit Meinrad prayed and died, his kinsman Eberhard of Hohenzollern founded a convent. The Bishop of Constance journeyed thither to perform the consecration. But the night before, through all the forest aisles swept the melody of angel choirs, and on the morrow came a message from Heaven that the consecration had been performed. Since then, Pope Leo granted indulgence to pilgrims of Our Lady of the Hermits, and thousands upon thousands go from all middle Europe, so that every breeze from there is freighted with Ave Marias. Quite a pious air the Finsterwald puts on, you may imagine."

"What a wild romance! I wonder if all those pilgrims think of it?"

"The indulgence is the only part that touches them. If they thought at all, it would generally be that the sweet Saint Hildegarde was a little fool for the saintship when she might have had a countess-ship. But here we are at Wergiswyl already. To the inn, Miss Ross?"

To the inn they rode on leisurely, watching the carpenter or two at work upon the cottages, which, with fresh flowers and fresh paint, had a neat, trim



look; observing next the knot of bystanders around the village well. Rather, she watched them, and he watched her. And in so doing, and drawing nearer to that well, another most distinctive of Unterwalden's features caught their attention—a young, good-looking couple, in gayest of all gay peasant garb, seated aloft, with downcast, shamefaced looks, upon a stone conspicuous to all who might pass to and from the well. Margaret wondered at their air of shrinking mortification, until Hans pointed out a placard in front, “Duty-forgetting Parents,” and explained that this was a time-honored punishment, and that the rod the culprits held in hand was formerly at the disposal of every passer-by.

Margaret had little inclination to avail herself of the ancient privilege. She may perchance have felt more for the woman than the woman for herself, for she touched her horse with the whip, and waving to Count Falkenstein, in another instant was before the inn.

## X.

"EACH cliff and headland and green promontory,  
Graven with records of the past,  
Excites to hero-worship.

THE lake is all one gleam of light. We can as yet see no dark shadow stealing on. Yet as we look down from the vessel's prow, there is a wave on which the sunbeams seem to dance along gayest of all. The sun glides on in its downward journey toward the mountains, and though we watch, we can not mark the paling of the noontide blue. And yet there is a glimpse of a brighter glory than all—one glimpse of the amethyst gate of Paradise, from which the breezes sweeping down have for a moment swept away all mists. And thus with even the serenest life. One uneventful day, the struggling stream of wayfarers upon life's current may not note its deeper brilliance; may rush on in headlong race, out-hurrying the tide, stretching out eager hands after the sunbeams sparkling through the spray driven up by their prows; hushing not the loud halloo and shouts of 'fast and faster,' and so blind to the higher light, deaf to the voice of Nature whispering in the rustling of the leaves along the shore, in the gurgling of the waters, "Peace, be still." But none the less that far-off ray

from the Amethyst Gate shines straight down into the serene eyes which as yet have watched but passing shadows, and into the troubled heart where for so long the First Watch of the Night has brooded. Those two, Margaret and Ernst, silent and thoughtful both amid the merry crowds that day, were not, therefore, the least happy there.

The lake is all one gleam of light and color. The gay steamer from Luzern, bearing on her side the escutcheon of the Forest Cantons, and fluttering on deck the broad banner of the confederacy amid the flags of the several cantons, puffs along, greeting the national echoes with national music, and followed by a train of smaller boats, skiffs with particolored awnings and paddles flashing out like rainbows through the spray. For it is the first Sunday after Ascension, and the Forest Cantons are floating down to Fluelen, there to form the procession to Altdorf in honor of Tell, the man whom the Forest Cantons delight to honor.

It is, as usual, a religious festival, and yonder, beneath the white and red flag of Unterwalden, is a knot of capuchins in long brown mantles, while the scarlet and gold of bishops' robes and the black of priests' come to light amid array of blue small-clothes, red vests, brilliant petticoats, and full white chemisettes. The monk's cowl is here, beside the masculine broad-brimmed hat, cocked up as though vain of its glittering peacock feathers; or there, near the jaunty sister of straw, with its bouquets and ribbons; or here again, almost veiled from sight behind that tall lace comb or the crimped frills of yonder nautilus-like cap.

On glides the friendly fleet, one scene and sound of

mirth. On, past those "footprints in the sands of time" which have traced upon these mountains so rich a dower of heroic story. An angle of the lake is turned, and there lies a belt of meadow-land, shut in in sacred isolation by dense copses. It is the Field of Grutli. Where pathless precipices toward the south become more frequent, and boats are the only access from wooded knoll to knoll, the Achsenberg rises in perpendicular ascent from six hundred feet below the surface of the water, to more than six thousand above. Here, where a ledge of rock, low upon the lake, affords merely a foundation and a few rude steps, amidst clustering shrubs stands Tell's Chapel, a small pavilion with open front and slender spire, marking the spot where Tell leaped from the boat that stormy night of his escape from Gessler.

As the steamer passed, Margaret from the stern was gazing down through the smooth track in its wake.

"Look, Mr. Lynde," she said, after a moment's silence, "how strangely visible and near, away beneath the clear blue water, is the Achsenberg's rocky base."

"As visible as the thought in your clear blue eyes, Miss Ross," was the rejoinder.

"And what is that?"

"Undefined longing to follow where those eddies disappear, plunging down, down, to the gravelly shore below, in search of nixie cavern hidden there."

"Strange," she answered, musingly, "I never look long into deep water without a something, an instinct, a feeling, drawing me downward. May not mariners' fables of alluring mermaids have had their origin in this? But how, Mr. Lynde, could you so truly read my unformed thought?"

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"Your every thought is legible. In the lineaments of most faces the practiced observer may read all there written. Sometimes the all is a mere title-page, high-sounding, perhaps, and fair enough, but like volumes in mock libraries, prettily gotten up in embossed covers and emptiness. For instance, one might as well seek modern transcendentalism under the title of 'Tom Jones,' as aught but stolid good humor in that pretty face," and he made a slight gesture where was seated on a coil of rope a young peasant, comely, in truth—a fair, round, placid face, a color like vermilion, and luxuriant, bright brown hair plaited in with narrow bands of white tape, fastened in a classic twist by the rose-hair-pin with its enriched and gilded head.

"See," he continued, as the girl, unconscious of being 'the cynosure of neighboring eyes,' fixed her gaze upon the waters steadfastly as Margaret had, "one would hardly find Lurlei-song or Nixie in her reverie. Rely upon it, the price her linen, spun last winter, will bring at the next fair, and how much of that sum may prudently be appropriated for a new ribbon to be worn at the next fête, are the questions pondered as she twists the ribbon of her hat around her fingers."

"I don't know," absently began Margaret, then hesitated. "I should like to know how you read——"

"Miss Margaret Ross? but hesitate lest the reader feel called upon to throw in a *douceur* of compliment? No danger. Here is the index, in characters that all may read.

"In the eyes a frank straightforwardness, an earnestness of purpose, apt, when so strongly marked, to produce too hasty disdain of triflers, who, like the fly

in the fable, while the world goes round will settle on its wheel and think their buzz accelerates the motion. Perfectly useless to brush them off—a thousand are ready for their places. Temper in the arching of the brows, which it were as well not to arouse. But smiled down, by the good-humored eyes. About the curves of the melancholy mouth some pride, and much, shall we say firmness or obstinacy? Another dangerous trait, lest crude opinions become fixed prejudices for good or evil. Already you recognize no virtues in the few you dislike, no faults in the many you love.

“The plot unformed, the story not half written out, enough is there to prove the daily reader hereafter most happy or most miserable.”

Margaret's face was troubled as she lifted it.

“Have I frightened you?” he said, in gentle answer to her mute appeal. “There is no cause for fear. Self-love and vanity find no place in that fair page, and while faith in good remains, the life-story must flow smoothly on. Smoothly as yonder swift current, or as the current of time with that young gentleman,” and he signified Mr. More, the gay centre of the party, at a short distance.

“He is among the liveliest of Irish melodies, is he not? Read for me now the thoughts of his neighbor, Count Falkenstein.”

“Not his Irish friend's last joke, but rather thoughts of weariness, mental yawnings, and digressions in the direction of his frequent glances. Can you guess whither?”

“You mistake,” she hastened to interpose. “As, were I at liberty, I could— But the other Count?”

"For all his survey of the changing cliffs, I warrant him building castles in the air."

"O Mr. Lynde! I begin to think you need a pair of spectacles! Only look; he is the very last person to trust to airy edifices. He does not hold even earth substantial."

"The stern compressure of the mouth is a resolve that the air-castle *shall* stand. As to being the very last person, all the world has gone on laboring upon such edifices ever since the grand failure at Babel proved how none founded on earth may rise to the region of the clouds."

"Always excepting Philosopher Lynde," was Margaret's mischievous suggestion.

"Not excepting Philosopher Lynde. His structure was of good, substantial brick and mortar, far fitter for Grosvenor Square and the habitation of a nineteenth century gentlewoman. But the woman was not found; and the untenanted mansion, much too weighty for its airy foundations, sank by degrees and fell crumbling away, so that not even the fall thereof was great."

"The woman never found! Did you not then seek too angelic a compound?"

"No, and there was the error. I went about, reversing Diogenes, in search of a woman. Some femininities complained loudly of the glare of my torch, and drew down their veils. Some threw them up ostentatiously, but went closely masked beneath. Many of these I soon discovered, however, all unconscious of the mask, though they generally bore in hand a small mirror into which they glanced from time to time approvingly. And thus so often had they re-

viewed the false face since its first adoption, that their own features had grown less familiar. Numbers hung conspicuously before their doors the sign: 'No woman lodged here.' Astonishing the diversity manifested in the sign-boards. Angels in plenty were there—what was I to do with an angel? many a pretty, winning spoiled child—puppets of 'back hair,' cashmeres and furbelows—an occasional *bas bleu*, without attachment, and oftentimes empty enough. Thus wears time away, and my torch is burning lower, yet throwing light enough to show up my gray hairs to the scornful damsels. Let it flicker. It has fulfilled its task. A woman found at last—a very woman—good, strong, frail, and faulty."

Margaret looked up, interested and questioning, and he laid his hand on hers as it rested on the railing. Perhaps he sighed because of its perfect quietude and her unembarrassed flush of pleased surprise, perceiving that she regarded him a delightful, eccentric middle-aged gentleman, to whom she had taken the greatest fancy in the world. Perhaps he cast one regretful glance back upon his airy ruins. It may be, he wondered at that moment whether, built upon a different plan, that structure might not stand, even in the seventh heaven of cloudland.

"And your Rose?" said Margaret.

"My little Rose is a very child, a winsome, loving, spoiled child. And such I mean to keep her; for woman does not always tread the careless path of children."

"Uncle Lynde! Uncle Lynde!" here called the winsome Rose, "if you and Miss Ross do not instantly come over to us we'll make an inroad upon you. For here we are, almost at Fluelen."



Almost at Fluelen, almost at the terminus of the lake, where dashes on the wild, romantic Reuss, beneath whose waters, in the inundation that swept away his native Bürglen, Tell, hero alike in life and death, was drowned in the attempt to save a child.

Each and every one now crowded to the bow, and our party, being first, stood foremost, beholding the onward road to Altdorf winding through the valley, with mountains towering on either hand; beholding, nearer, the village with its narrow, dingy, ancient streets, its quay, where porters, coachmen, Alpenstocks, student-caps wreathed with evergreen remembrances, gay Parisian hats and flounces, bright-faced ladies, ghastly, dead-white, vacant-staring, purposeless, half-crawling cretins——

An exclamation from Miss Lynde drew Margaret's attention from all these.

"What is the matter?" she asked, catching her expression of comic distress.

"Is that the first cretin you have seen? I don't wonder you are horrified," said Alice, "and—don't look—but how can that poor creature with a goitre nearly as big as her head above it, make it so conspicuous by wearing that flashy necklace? I wish some horrid sort of fascination did not compel me to look at them. I have seen only too many, and so will you, Miss Lynde, before you reach Geneva."

"Ah bah!" cried the Baroness, who had turned her back, and who was smiling on the quietly observant Polish Count; "for me, I will avert me all days from the *désagremens*. Flashy necklaces and goîtres are in bad taste, no doubt; and it is in very bad taste, very, for the—the—Landamman—to permit these

poor wretches to go about among these beautiful mountains. But for me, I shut my eyes to it all, and voilà pourquoi I amuse me all through life."

"But it is not that at all," exclaimed Rose in serio-comic vexation, "though it is all sufficiently horrible, certainly. But—the Yankee! See, there he is upon the landing, just as if he expected somebody. I know he will be revenged for our giving him the slip at Luzern. There! he has recognized us—he moves off—he is coming, I do believe!"

"Remember," Margaret reminded, "your promise to endure him an entire week provided the fates would give him that cold plunge."

The morrow finds Mr. Lynde and his niece—I am not sure about the Yankee—on their way through Uri, and our travelers home-bound for Lowerz.

## XI.

"I have not loved the world nor the world me."

"YOUR simile is a just one, Mademoiselle. Friendship *is* like yonder lake reflecting thus the evening star. Behold, even now the breeze ruffles the surface of the mirror, and the star is gone."

"My simile is not just, Count Zalkiewski. Friendship can not change."

"And yet when does it not?"

"Not friendship. Oftentimes companionship, similarity of tastes, even mere acquaintance, come to us in Friendship's garb and in her holy name, and when they waver or play us false, we scoff at Friendship whom, it may be, we have never known."

"And what is friendship, then?" Zalkiewski asked.

"I will trust no more comparisons of my own. Let Jean Paul answer for me," returned Margaret. "Jeder Freund ist des andern Sonne und Sonnenblume zugleich; er zieht und er folgt."

"Jean Paul speaks from his own high heart. How many such are there?"

"Is not every heart a sunflower, upon which, if the true sun of friendship shine—not a flickering torch, flaming only while the air around is tranquil, or burning itself out in time, a heap of cold dull ashes—but

the sun, far above winds and storms and changes—if this shine upon it, will it not turn and follow faithfully? And if most hearts find their type, not in the delicate heliotrope, but in the coarser sunflower, even these, dark-spotted and rough-grained though they be, are not less true.

He cast one passionate glance upon her—a glance which fell unseen, for she was gazing dreamily beyond the steep mountain-side where she had wandered—upon the lake below, and Lowerz lying in a cove, half seen between the foliage.

“Count Zalkiewski,” she said, after a pause, raising her eyes with obvious timidity. “For the last week I have sought an opportunity to say to you what I am going to say now, and you have steadily refused it in action and in manner. I speak now, not as I would have done, to secure the friendship I imagined you returned for that which I could not but feel for the saviour of my life, but because I owe it to myself. That night upon Pilatus—in the excitement of the moment and in womanly horror of bloodshed—I usurped what in these latter days is held above the range of woman’s province—a peacemaker’s. For this an apology is due, and I owe it to myself, therefore, not to explain, but to apologize.”

He was much moved, and answered hurriedly:

“You can not need to do so, Mademoiselle. I am not unjust, and I knew you ignorant of the wrong, the cruel wrong, you did me.”

“I could not have believed you so revengeful, Count Zalkiewski,” she said, in a low tone.

“Nor am I. But there are insults blood alone wipes out. His blood or mine, I cared not which.

You had little cause for fear," he went on, with a bitter laugh. "Ten to one but I had fallen, not he. Though fortune seldom favors a desperate man."

She looked up incredulously.

"You can not mean what you say. You can not imagine that I——" She stopped, overpowered with blushes.

He did not speak nor move, only stood watching and awaiting her conclusion.

"I could not think of another before him who saved my life."

Silence ensued, during which she rose.

"Stay," he said, "and tell me, if I dare ask a great, a passing great boon."

"Of me? Any thing in the world."

"Grant me back the friendship you once gave."

"A question first, Monsieur. All this while—this week—you had determined on relinquishing your friend, and had so reconciled yourself to the loss, that for calm agreeability you could not have been surpassed?"

"I had determined that she relinquished me. I had reconciled myself to fear all loss, save only on one fair morning, one fair fleeting morning-dream. Calm agreeability! God knows the cost."

A brilliant smile lit up her face.

"Then remain my friend," she said, "and there is no boon in the question. Here is my hand upon it, in British fashion."

If an impulse thrilled him to press that hand to his lips, to gather to his own that only noble heart which beat for him, albeit but in friendship, he obeyed it not, merely holding for an instant the unconscious hand.

The instant passed, and to Margaret was invisible the officious boy-god who insinuated his own rosy palm into the clasp of friendship.

"And now," she said, drawing up her shawl, "the twilight warns me to begone. Two, three stars, besides that pale Venus about which we waxed so poetic. They will begin to think at the *ingle-neuk* that I have lost myself in these woods, instead of having found a friend."

In the descent of the mountain-side, the Count gathered a tuft of the graceful blue harebell, which he gave to Margaret.

"Let this," she said, separating the flowers, and returning him a spray, "let this be the sign-floral of our bond. Should aught of change come between us, may these fairy-bells toll the knell of friendship." As she spoke, she inclosed her blossoms within the double covers of her watch.

"I trust," said the Count, while he examined the flowers, "this is no usual *gage d'amitié*, else how weary must be these fragile stems of ringing changes upon inconstancy."

"Skeptic, beware lest your own breathings of doubt first set the bells in motion. Pray, where did you learn your creed of unbelief?"

"Experience is a stern master, *Mademoiselle*."

"But Love and Hope are gentle monitors."

"Ay, but they came not to me."

"Never?" she asked, and her voice softened. "Has life always been thus hard, thus bitter? Have you——"

She stopped, embarrassed.

He looked down upon her, smiling somewhat sadly.

"What is it my friend would ask?" he said; "if I

have always been thus hard, thus bitter? Does she not think me that?"

She colored, but replied frankly :

"Well, she does."

"She wonders what life-long lesson has made me thus. Does she care to hear it?"

"If it do not pain you," she returned.

"I will not make it long, although it goes back thirty-five years for me.

"My father, Count Sigismund Zalkiewski, bore arms for his country under Kosciusko, fought by his side upon the fatal field of Maciejowice, where Poland's fetters were riveted, and was there captured with him. Catherine, who seldom spared an enemy, threw the prisoners into close confinement. Her successor, Paul, liberated the greater number the year following ; but my father, whose friends—pardon, Mademoiselle—whose acquaintances, were lukewarm, and whose enemies warm, was not among the fortunate. It was rumored that he had fallen in battle, and his memory died away from the memory of those whom he had loved and served. One only had not forgotten. A peasant maiden, daughter of his serf. She searched the bloody battle-field on the evening of that dread day, braved the ravening wolves that battened on the yet unburied corpses, braved the even fiercer soldiery, and finding him not, believed with faith unshaken that he lived. She went then to his brother and only near kinsman, told her confidence, implored his aid. He, perchance, incredulous of her tale, perchance moved by fear of losing the thirty pieces of silver, the price of his country's blood, scornfully dismissed her. But Maida never relinquished her one life-aim. For

fifteen years she wandered, even through Siberia's wilds, until she traced the lost one to his fortress-prison without the gates of St. Petersburg. She became servant to his jailer, and at length gained access to his cell. Fifteen years of weary pilgrimage had changed the fair young girl into the careworn woman, and fifteen years of solitude and chains had left but little of the gay youth in the man old and gray at thirty-five. Nevertheless, they recognized each other instantly. And if once they had loved with a boy and girl passion, on his part half condescension, on hers half pride in the lover's station, how far deeper must have been that love, tried by long sorrow, purified from all earthly dross. With the connivance of the jailer's wife, they were married in secret, and despite the wife's incessant labor and the husband's captivity, there was happiness within those dungeon-walls, where I was born. I, and five years afterward a sister. Then all was discovered, and the commandant denied to my mother access to the fortress. Had she possessed an influential friend, doubtless my father might have been released. But, friendless, poor, and of lowly station, how could she win a moment's attention from the noble by birth, who recognize only the nobility heralded by decorations and armorial bearings? Thus vainly petitioned Maida. My faithful Zozia, my father's faithful nurse, shared her troubles then, and she has told me the tale, in her own rude way. I can recall her now, my poor mother—her pale face shaded by braids of raven hair, and those dark, patient, wistful eyes, fixed upon the prison-walls, watching for a wan face at a barred window. Thither she daily went, when her labor for our bread was



over, and sat by the way-side, her arms close about me."

His voice trembled. Margaret's arm lay within his, and its unconscious pressure encouraged him to continue:

"A year went by, and one night—it lived ever in my childish memory—we were together in our wretched hovel—my mother, Zozia, with my infant sister in her arms, and I—when the door was flung wide open, and a man stood within the threshold. Zozia seized a fire-brand, and threw its wavering light full upon the face of the new-comer. And then it was that I saw, face to face, for the first and last time, my father. A man bowed beneath the weight of sorrow, not of years—gray and feeble, for he staggered as he closed the door, and leaned for support against the wall. Yet withal was somewhat noble in his mien, and the fire of the deep blue eyes was not all gone out. He opened his arms, and my mother, pale as death, rushed into them. Zozia drew me to his feet, and for one moment, and one moment only, I felt the grasp of a father's hand. 'Maida,' he said—and those only words of his I ever heard were forever graven on my memory—'my time is short. I have escaped. Will you sacrifice yourself yet once again for me, and leave your boy—our boy—to Zozia? Moments are life, and we can not fly with both the children.'

"I do not remember that my mother spoke, but she turned quickly, and in a moment came again, prepared for the journey. She wrapped my father in a heavy cloak which I think she must have hoarded for such an emergency, and then took the infant from Zozia, embracing whom, she would have pressed into her

hand the half of her small store of money; but Zozia steadily refused.

"'You will care for our boy, our true friend,' my mother gasped, taking me in her arms, while the baby sister crowed in glee, catching at me with her dimpled hands.

"'Before God I promise,' Zozia solemnly replied.

"As my mother bowed her brow to mine, a long wavy tress, loosed from its braid, drooped against my cheek. I twined it round my fingers, and she motioned to Zozia to cut it off. 'Our Ernst may else forget me,' she moaned.

"One long, long, close embrace, a hurried caress from my father, and I had looked my last on both."

He paused. Lowerz was reached, and the cottage gate. Margaret's tears flowed fast, and she shaded them from him with her hand.

"I distress you. It is too mournful," he said.

"No, no. Do not stop now."

They passed within the gate and stood leaning upon it, while he resumed:

"Zozia took me to her old home on the estate once my father's, then my uncle's. Here I was as other neighboring peasant children, but always held aloof. The shadow of my early childhood yet hung over me, and I dreamed in silence over those faint memories. Two or three years later, two sad letters came to Zozia; one from my mother, dwelling at first upon my father's brightening prospects, and upon the fond hopes of both that a few months would provide a home for the faithful Zozia and for me. To this was added a short, broken line, telling of the sudden death of my father, who indeed had never recovered from

the effects of his captivity. This letter and the tress of hair are all that remain to me of her."

As he spoke, he placed in Margaret's hand a long dark curl, folded in a worn and faded letter. Margaret raised it reverently to her lips, as might a devotee the relic of a martyr saint. He watched her, his eyes kindling; then hurried on.

"Few weeks only intervened, before another heavy letter came. My mother too, was dead in a foreign land."

"And your sister?" Margaret softly asked.

"The lady who wrote, a German lady of rank, adopted her, struck by her rare beauty and winning ways, she wrote. Years ago, when my struggles with the world were at an end, I wrote, claiming her, entreating her to visit me, offering to go for her. I was never answered."

She gave him a gentle glance of sympathy.

"After that German letter," he continued, "I went to school, thence to college. I more than suspect Zozia of having worked upon my uncle's fears, or conscience, or both. She was reputed a weird woman, thought to have dealings with the elfin people. Be that as it may, money was always at my command from the moment my collegiate course began at Warsaw. Money, not friends. For the young aristocrats, than whom none was more aristocratically proud than I of my unknown lineage—looked askance at the stranger, who could revert no farther than to the florins in his purse, for those who made him what he was. And he withdrew within the defenses of his pride, so vigilantly on the defensive, that perchance he courted blows, or parried where none were aimed at him.

"Then came the never to-be-forgotten twenty-ninth of November, 1830. All Warsaw rose to arms in a night, and Poland's tyrants trembled. But for the incapacity of our successive leaders, Chlopichi, Radzivil, Skrzynecki, who shall say Poland might not now stand free among nations? And yet she shall. May it be while this right arm has strength to strike for her." His eyes flashed eagerly. "Followed the glorious day—the disastrous victory—of Ostrolenka. Brave Skrzynecki—how we follow, blindly, frantically, shouting the Warsaw hymn, defying death and tyranny! Forward, forward—man to man, sword to sword, pike to pike. Night falls, we conquer—but death has conquered us. As our general gave orders to retreat to Warsaw that night, he echoed sadly Kosciuszko's words: *Finis Poloniae*. Afterward was the fatal division of our forces at Warsaw, succeeded by capitulation. More fortunate than many of my brothers-in-arms, I escaped, an exile. The bitterness of that word, the fierce ensuing combat with poverty and grief, I will not describe. Suffice it to say, men stood aloof from my sinking fortunes, and struggling on alone, I learned to know life a fierce and lonely struggle. Five years later, Zozia came to me with what then seemed untold wealth. My uncle had died childless, and having converted his estates into specie, bequeathed all to me, secretly, through Zozia. Now you have heard my hard and bitter history, do you condemn me altogether for being hard and bitter too?"

"I could not condemn you," she replied, coloring, and hesitating, while he awaited her answer. "But she—your noble mother—she was not."

He was silent. "You are right," he said at length;

then with sudden earnestness, "Never let your friendship fail me, lest I grope in darkness denser than that from which you save."

She raised her hand toward the starry heavens, saying: "How bright is all above us! Can we ever grope in darkness?"

## XII.

"Coming events cast their shadows before."

"I FEAR we shall be gone a week, Margaret. Uri is a hunter's paradise, you know, and Mr. Ross will enjoy it to the full. As would I, were it not that we leave you here. But you will write, will you not? I shall, from——"

"One moment, Harry," she interrupted. "Here comes Count Zalkiewski. I must see whether he has brought my Faust."

So saying, she sprang down the stairs from the balcony, and rapidly traversing the garden path, was waiting at the gate when Count Zalkiewski rode up.

Harry watched in evident annoyance, as she stood there, shading her eyes with one hand from the bright morning sunshine, while she extended the other first in cordial English greeting to Zalkiewski, and afterward to receive the richly bound volume he offered.

Harry moved restlessly about, with increasing irritation, and long before the conference at the gate ended in a gay *au revoir*, he had turned abruptly on his heel, reëntering the cottage.

"Papa wishes to see me alone? I wonder what can be the matter," said Margaret, as she repeated to her-

self the message Luise had come to her, as she strolled with her book through the arbor, to deliver.

And with vague uneasiness she paced up and down, now and then stopping to twine through the lattice a drooping rose-branch, laden with fragrant clusters.

She had not long to wait. Mr. Ross entered, and putting his arm round her, drew her down to the bench beside him.

"Troubled, my Daisy? What is it?" he asked fondly.

"Why, do you know, papa, I have been fancying myself your wee Daisy of the olden time, dreading one of your dear old sermons, for text the spiriting away of our Dominie Sampson's spectacles, or the 'decorating of his sober little pig-tail after the manner of the wild Indians. Have I been a very naughty bairn?' And she looked up at him, archly penitent.

"Not a very naughty—only a very foolish bairn."

"Why, how? What have I done?"

It was some time before Mr. Ross spoke again, and when he did, it was hardly in reply.

"The world has grown older, Margaret, in the last half-century, but it is at least an open question whether it has grown in wisdom. I am going to tell you a story of rather more than forty years ago.

"In the fine old library of one of our ancient Highland castles, there were two men advanced in years. Friends they were, for one had thrown his arm across the shoulder of the other, as they stood there before the fire, awaiting the answer to a summons of the bell. It came almost immediately—so immediately as to appear miraculous, taking into consideration the un-ruddied state of her cap-ribbons—in the person of a re-

spectable, middle-aged nurse, bearing in arms a confused heap of muslins, and laces, cooings, dimpled fists, and round pink cheeks. The elder of the gentlemen advanced and scrutinizingly withdrew the laces farther from the pink cheeks.

“‘You say right, friend Mowbray, you say right,’ he commented, with an approving pat to the bundle as he came back to the hearth. ‘You talk of dying, but you must live to see her the toast among old fogies, such as you and I, the rage among the young gallants. Marry, she bids fair to upset the hearts of the young and the bumpers of the old. Very like her mother, poor lady.’

“The other glanced sorrowfully down upon the mourning which he wore, and both turned again to a table at the farther end of the apartment. There, uppermost among the deeds and papers strewn about, was a freshly-signed will, bequeathing castle this and that, moneys here and there—in short, the entire property of Ronald Mowbray of that ilk, to Matilda, ‘sole daughter of his house and heart,’ on the condition of her marrying, at the age of sixteen, her distant kinsman, son of her father’s friend.”

“Poor thing, poor thing! It is like Jephtha’s daughter, papa. Only, it is upon the shrine of Mammon that he vows the sacrifice. How can he foresee whether it will be a meek and gentle following lamb, or a proud, passionate, loving, hating woman?”

He frowned, continuing as though uninterrupted:

“Years passed, and brought another winter evening in that library. In the doorway stands again the elderly serving-woman, scarcely changed. A slender girl with downcast, soft blue eyes, dazzling fair, pink



cheeked and rose-lipped beneath her bridal veil, stood with one hand in her aged guardian's, the other given to a youth at her side. A moment, and the scene shifts. The halls are filled with noble guests, a priest has taken the father's place, and the two who have not met since they prattled baby loves together, are one for evermore."

"Ah poor girl! And was she not unhappy? Did not her chains gall her to the death?"

"She is your mother, Margaret."

"Papa, papa, you are not displeased? I never thought of her middle name of Mowbray. But, my own papa," she went on, kissing his hand, "that Jephthaism would not do often. Few could follow so trustfully, so lovingly, as my mamma—still fewer lead like my papa. Depend upon it, if we women, pour fule bodies though we be, rivet not our own fetters, they chafe, be they of iron or the finest gold. It boots not which."

"Now you talk indeed like a foolish bairn," he made grave answer. "As if human nature, and nineteenth century human nature, must needs shut its eyes to the casket which enfolds the gem. Were it nothing, think you, had my Maude—brought up in her seclusion a bride from childhood—at the last flung aside those—fetters, you call them—turned from father, kindred, home, and country, to follow—for a happy woman does not lead—some foreign—stranger, I would say—far out of sight of all her earliest associations? Are these nothing to you?"

"Every thing, every thing, my father. You know that well. I could almost find it in my heart to wish——"

She did not go on, although her father waited. After a moment—

"My daughter, you love Harry," he affirmed, but paused, as if for answer.

"Love Harry? Of course I do," was the astonished rejoinder.

"You love him, have given yourself to him, and yet you daily try him past endurance. Can you not see how, in receiving the attentions of Count Zalkiewski, you wound Harry?"

The rose in Margaret's hand wore not a deeper flush than that which colored cheek and brow as she listened to her father's words. She crushed the innocent flower between her palms, and tore it wrathfully petal from petal.

"Has Harry told you this? Has he asked you to say this to me?" she demanded, her eyes flashing.

"No, my child. Harry's feeling is not of jealousy, but of pain, at your too apparent neglect."

She hid her face on his shoulder, keeping it there while she spoke.

"He shall not again be thus pained. But, papa, you have mistaken Count Zalkiewski. Your Margaret is no pearl of price to any but to you and Harry. We are friends, nothing more, and never can be more. He has never spoken as if he—cared for me."

"Nor looked it, Margaret?"

"Nor looked it. You must not let Harry think so. There, he is coming down the walk, equipped for hunter's warfare. Papa, don't let him know that you have said this to me."

He advanced to the arbor's entrance, but came back with a troubled look, and took her in his arms.

"My child, you will surely marry Harry?" he said earnestly.

"Papa, papa, I do believe you want to get rid of me. Don't dream of shaking me off thus. Your Daisy is fast rooted here." She pressed her clasped hands above his heart.

"But if I should leave my darling? If—nay, no tears"—and he kissed away the drops starting to her lowered lashes—"would she not then?"

She tried to smile, but her lip only quivered.

"Does my darling say yes?"

"Yes."

"Promise me."

"I promise," she faltered.

When the last farewells were over, and the hunters had departed, she took refuge in her own room, and securing the door, gave way to passionate weeping. Wherefore, she herself knew not.

She sauntered along the garden path, in meditation over her father's words. It was evening, and the moon gleamed fitfully through fleecy clouds upon her head as on she moved, her hands clasped loosely behind.

Like a caged animal she paced up and down—a caged fawn long accustomed to its bounds, yet looking still from out wild dilating eyes to the distant glimpse of forest haunts, the breezy downs, and freedom. She felt the straining of the cords that, as she had said, were galling her at last. She looked back upon her past indifference in amazement. How could she have been thus passive month by month, and year

by year? Could she ever school herself to that again? Or how had she changed, when naught else had, and Harry was ever so good, so true?

With an impatient shrug, she shook herself free from thought, and humming a French chanson, stopped before the gate, watching the moon upon the waters, and the light fishing-boats, flitting here and there on sails as silvery white as the moonbeams. And now a shout rang out from boat to boat, awakening the echoes and drowning the murmur of the waves.

The sound of hoofs clattering along the road roused her from reverie, but not before the horse was suddenly checked; and throwing the reins loose upon the animal's neck, Count Zalkiewski dismounted.

"At this hour for dreams the meetest, may I ask of what Miss Ross is dreaming?" he asked, after she had welcomed and granted him admittance within the wicket.

"Not dreaming, only watching the stars.

'I give the first watch of the night  
To the red planet Mars.'"

"The first watch of the night!" he repeated. "How think you—for some, does not the first watch of the night endure throughout all time? For some, is there no light for evermore, save 'the cold light of stars'?"

"Never, never," she made answer earnestly. "The first watch of the night is a trial-time, and may endure but until we

'Know how sublime a thing it is  
To suffer and be strong.'"

“It may be so. But those words are never meant for such a night as this,” he said more cheerfully. “Theirs rather the midnight when storm winds sweep by, struggling for mastery over dense clouds through the lightning-cleft breach of which Mars glows with ever-unmoved steadfastness. Your poet has described this evening also :

‘Beholding the moon rise  
Over the pallid sea and the silvery mists of the meadows.  
Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven  
Blossoms the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels.’

By the way, there are singular criticisms on that last line. Have you a vision of ‘an angel with a knot of stars on his breast’?”

“Oh! who could dream of that! Rather, does not the poet’s heaven-searching gaze discover to him white-winged seraphim in light and snowy clouds like these, hovering in loving care among their blossoms, shining there perpetual forget-me-nots to man—warning and consoling?”

After a pause, during which his eyes dwelt on the far away out-look of hers, he asked:

“Miss Ross, have you ever been told of your resemblance to Evangeline?”

“Often. But I have no faith in it. Those deep, deep brown eyes—that exquisite expression—nay, no compliment, Monsieur. Mirrors are truthful.”

“God defend you ever from the misery of that expression!”

There was that in his voice which impelled a hurried glance from Margaret. The moon that moment emerging from a cloud, she read in his eyes that which

she had never seen before, the deep, tender, passionate love in his soul.

Had her father's question, "nor looked it, Margaret?" been deferred for but a single day, how different must have been the answer!

She shivered.

"You are cold. This evening breeze is too chill for you," he said. "Let us go in."

The hand she rested on his offered arm, trembled as with cold—trembled as trembled her very heart within her. The mist was fallen from her eyes. She saw now, and shuddered. That one quick, fiery glance of his had kindled the smouldering fire within, which she had thought but the kindly warmth of friendship. She scorned herself for her falsehood, unwitting though it were, to one who was ever so true to her. What bitter mockery, that tender tie of old companionship, which snapped asunder like silken thread against the fire leaping up against it. But she crushed it down with strong determination. What, though it burn her heart out, die it should—unless—unless— Her father only could release her from that rash but solemn promise—made, however, long ago to Harry May. Would he? Ought she to ask it?

But resolutely she put away murmur and question, and ere she gained the balcony, was calm. As she passed into the parlor, she sent Luise with a summons for Alice. She dared not risk encountering another such glance.

Luise returning with lights, brought a message from Alice, that her sister would make her apologies to Count Zalkiewski, for she was really tired to death from her morning ramble.

Margaret could not conceal her annoyance.

"Alice is a wayward child," she said to the Count; "and mamma is sleeping after one of her nervous headaches."

She had continued standing, in the hope that he would leave her. But he seemed hardly to hear her words, and placed a chair for her at the centre-table.

Thus forced to a tête-à-tête, she sat down, and taking up some embroidery from the table, busied her hands with it, much to its detriment, quite regardless of the scolding she must receive on Alice's discovery of the mischief done. She strove to confine her thoughts to bright silks and graceful pattern, but they grew indistinct before her, and as the silence became oppressive, with an effort she raised her eyes. To meet his fixed upon her in the same strange gaze.

Confused and blushing, she began to talk, scarcely conscious of the subject until his reply startled her.

"Yes, I had learned the departure of the Baroness and suite. You meet at Baden very soon, they say. And I, may I follow you there?"

He had pushed aside the portfolio of engravings before him, and now leaned forward, reading her face. The keen questioning of his gaze, and a tremor in the low deep tones made her instinctively aware that in her answer lay his fate and hers. Her eyes fell till the lashes quivered upon her pale cheeks, her white lips parted, almost with a gasp, and slowly, hesitatingly, she spoke:

"I—we— It would not be worth your while, our stay may be so short. That is, if you considered being with us. And it is not exactly the Baden season, is it?" she added, with forced calmness, very like coldness.

Zalkiewski's brow darkened. She went on hurriedly:

"I trust we shall very soon be again in Scotland. I am weary, weary of a roving life, and will never, nevermore leave Ross-shire, I think. There is my fate, you know—" and she laughed a short, hard laugh. "Harry May's estate joins ours, and we have been bound, betrothed, from childhood."

She kept her eyes upon her work, of which her little trembling fingers were making irretrievable ruin. When at last she did venture to look up, his sun-browned face was pale even to the firm-set lips. But he was quite calm, and his gaze followed a dusky moth fluttering round and round the candle, upon the table on which he leaned.

"Poor fool!" he said bitterly, while the insect hovered nearer and nearer; "it sees the danger, the certain doom, in lingering here; yet it persists—it can not go." He took the tiny, quivering, singed creature in his hand.

Margaret rose and held out hers for it.

"To what purpose?" he asked, looking up earnestly. "Would you put it out of its misery? Then crush it here. It will come back and back to the beautiful light that glows not for it, until it perish."

Her voice sank, but she replied steadily, meeting his full gaze:

"It shall not destroy itself. It must go out into the quiet night, and forget the poor light of the little candle in the high radiance of stars."

She took the moth, but it wheeled from her hold, over the flame once again, before it was captured.

"You see, it would not go. Do not put it out into



the cold dark night. It cannot see the stars. Let it stay; it is seared already; what matter if it burn itself to death?"

He spoke, pleading as if for his own life or death. But she turned away without reply, and put the moth out at the window, which she closed against it. As she yet delayed there, her burning brow pressed against the cool glass, he came to her side. He took her passive hand.

"I am going," he said, low and passionately, while she moved not, nor turned toward him; "I shall come here no more. But you will not be angry, will you, if I do not go away; if I stay where I may sometimes see you? It will be for so short a time?"

Her answer was slow in coming, very faint and tremulous in utterance.

"Would it not be better——"

"To see you no more? I know all that you would urge. I can not. I am like your poor, foolish moth," he said, with a bitterness that struck Margaret to the very soul. Then he began again quietly: "I can not thank you for your warning, but I do thank you for your sweet, your heavenly sympathy. Keep still some friendship for me in your heart. And now farewell—my Margaret—my darling—my only love."

He grasped both her hands. The next moment the quick strokes of Ostrolenka's hoofs struck upon her heart.

### XIII.

"The air is full of farewells to the dying  
And mournings for the dead."

"You walk late, Miss Ross."

She turned, recalled from thought so absorbing that she had been deaf to the sound of hoofs approaching. Count Zalkiewski dismounted and walked beside her, leaving Ostrolenka to follow.

All this week he had not visited the cottage, and Margaret, awaiting her father's coming in suspense, daily more and more harassing, had avoided any fortuitous rencontre. But this evening, weary of inaction, she had wandered out in the sunset, looking with anxious yet fearful expectancy down the road by which the hunters must return.

Her color came and went, and her voice trembled, as, not daring to meet his eyes, she replied, pausing in her walk:

"Yes, I have strolled later than I intended. I hoped to meet my father on his way home, but it is so late that I must go no farther."

He turned back with her.

The mention of her father, which he construed as intended to convey the remembrance of the absent

successful lover, doubly armed his pride, and therefore was his manner the cooler when he spoke again.

The scenery, the beauty of the evening, Mrs. Ross's health, were the topics he for a few moments pursued. Then he inquired, in a matter-of-course way:

"And when is Lowerz to lose you? Have you formed definite plans?"

"No," she replied, "not definite. We are waiting for my father's return."

And the Count, as she could not resist glancing up to see, listened with the air of courteous concern of a mere acquaintance.

The indignant blood mounted to her brow. Her pride, too, aroused. In his presence now, that evening was unsubstantial as a dream. She was ready to believe that she had deceived herself—had given undue weight to phrases of mere gallantry. However that might be, the conviction flashed upon her that he did not love her now. And, stung to the soul with shame and self-scorn, she made the quick resolve to crush out every heart-throb to which his heart no longer answered.

She lifted her head, and shrank no longer from his eyes. Gayly she smiled and talked, unembarrassed as himself.

She dropped her glove as she walked, and turning back for it, caught sight of a solitary horseman riding slowly and dejectedly up the road. She looked—then with a low cry stood still. She had recognized Harry.

Zalkiewski spoke to her—she did not hear—again and again, and still no answer. He touched her, alarmed. She started, and her white lips parted in a hoarse whisper.

"My father, my father, he is not there."

He drew nearer lest she should fall, she was so ghastly with unutterable terror. But he did not speak, did not venture to comfort or to reassure her; what was he to her that he should intrude upon the sacred presence of her grief?

It was indeed Harry.

When he came near, and saw Margaret's face, he sprang from his horse, and hastening to her, drew her arm within his own.

Count Zalkiewski, unheeded by both, drew back.

Margaret fixed her burning eyes upon Harry. There was no evading them. Reply he must, although the rigid lips could scarcely form the words.

"I know—I know—but is he yet alive?"

"No—my own—my poor Margaret!"

One, watching, saw that dear head droop upon another's shoulder, saw another's arm supporting her, another bend his lips close to hers, to murmur words of consolation he would gladly die for the right to breathe.

None saw the strong man stagger against that pine-tree for support. None saw him stoop for and treasure next his heart a little trampled glove, raised from the dust, where it had lain beneath a horse's hoofs—poor castaway from another's store of love.

#### XIV.

*"E come quel che con lena affanata  
Uscito fuor del pelago alla riva  
Si volge all' acqua perigliosa e guata—  
Così l'animo mio, che ancor fuggiva,  
Si volse 'ndietro a rimirar lo passo."*

"A PENNY for your thoughts, Sir Knight of the Rueful Countenance," and Margaret, herself wan and pale in her deep mourning dress, laid her hand, with an attempt at playfulness, on Harry's shoulder.

He turned from the window, whence he had been looking out upon the lake, where the waves were dull and leaden as the rainy heavens above. He caught her hand, while her lashes drooped before his gaze, and she grew even paler than before.

"Margaret," he began, "I have that to say, which in my weakness has been perhaps too long deferred. Months ago, even before our loss, I should have spoken. Will you hear me now?"

She did not speak, but simply bowing her head, moved to the sofa, and motioned him to the seat beside her.

After a moment, he broke the silence.

"Listen, Margaret. Hear me now, as if I were only the friend Harry of by-gone days, and had no nearer,

no dearer claim on your forbearance." He faltered, but with a strong effort resumed :

"When you first gave me your troth, Margaret, the knowledge of my unworthiness cast no chill upon my joy. But since, a fear, which vainly I thrust from me, returns ever more and more urgent to be heard. For many weeks I dared not face it, but to-day I bring my fear, my hope, my life, and leave the issue in your hands. You have given me the right to call you mine. But, Margaret, I would have you truly mine. I will shrink no longer from the possibility that the dream of love may have deluded me, and that in reality the unmeasured, undeserved gratitude your generous heart accords, and the old dear friendship, urge you to bind yourself with a bond that may prove iron to your soul. If it be so indeed, if you shrink and tremble before the future, do not hesitate to speak freely to the Harry of old. We will forget all after days. Nay, hear me out, dear one. I have never dreamed you love me as others might exact. But if your heart fail not from life's long battle at my side, then, my own love, my own Margaret, fear not to come to me. My love shall be your firm defense, and your dear friendship shall bear me on to gain even your love."

He ceased. Long since she had dropped her face upon the arm of the sofa, and he could only mark the hurried breathing agitating her frame.

She was far away in the past. She saw two children wander hand in hand among the mountain-passes of her own Scotland. She saw them together playing or reading from the same book, beneath the oak-grove's sunny shades ; or together around the broad

hearth heaped with blazing fagots, listening with rapt attention to wondrous tale of brownie or of daring border-chieftain. And with a rush of tenderness she remembered how gentle to all her childish caprices was the Harry of old.

Yet another scene; although she pressed her hand upon her eyes to shut it out. A fearful Alpine gorge, miles distant. A bruised and mangled form lying helpless, far down the rocky steep. And the Harry of to-day, who had risked his life in the descent, bending over, and when the last breath had been gasped painfully away, bearing the lifeless body up the same perilous way. And in her memory were written those last faintly-scrawled words by the hand of that dying man :

"My darling, be your mother's comfort and support. Sustain her now that I am no more beside. Your promise gives me peace in death. Keep it as you value my dying blessing. God comfort and bless my Margaret."

Could she hesitate? If she might but make him happy! She considered not "how bitter a thing it is to look at happiness through another man's eyes," but thinking only of him, said :

"I will leave you to judge, Harry. If, after hearing what I have to say, you still will have it so, I am yours." She waited, gathering resolution, then went on in choking, painful gasps: "God knows how hard it is to say, I have—loved. You can not take, in taking mine, an untouched heart. But I have struggled strongly, and I think, I trust, have conquered. Do not despise me, Harry; I thought—I thought—he loved me."

With a wild burst of weeping, she hid her face.

Neither jealousy nor amazement made him for one instant forgetful of her. His arm was round her, and drew her head down to his shoulder. He soothed her into calmness with his gentle, tender words. Then he met her timid glance in mournful steadiness.

"But he does love you, Margaret. He must love you. You shall not sacrifice yourself," he said, his mind wandering in doubt among her numerous acquaintances.

"No, no, he cares not for me. And I love no longer. I am no suppliant for his kindness," and she raised her head proudly.

"But, Margaret——"

"I tell you, Harry, were he now to feel for me what I once dreamed he did, I would not hear him. Never, never!"

She rose and moved toward the door. Harry followed, laying a detaining touch upon her arm.

"Margaret," he said, his voice tremulous with yearning tenderness, "you have said you will not love one. Would it grieve you to receive the life-long love of another?"

She turned, and in his sheltering arms her weary heart found rest.



## XV.

*Har.*—We may not part.

*Gun.*—Ay, though our severed hearts bleed e'en to death.

• This may we not—we may not break our faith,  
May not in life's stern warfare recreant turn,  
And, trembling, flee the battle."

THEY were together in the cottage parlor—the mother and daughters—Mrs. Ross reclining upon the sofa, her closed eyelids heavy with slowly gathering tears; Margaret on a low seat by her side, her work fallen in her lap, her gaze bent absently upon the floor; Alice at the window, intent upon a guide-book. A shadow rested on every face—the shadow Death leaves behind where he has been. The passing sunshine of a smile may flicker there, but the shadow surely darkens after.

"Mamma," said Alice, flinging back her drooping curls, "what day shall we leave Lowerz? When does Jeanie write she will be at Baden, Margaret?"

Margaret drew a letter from her work-basket, unfolding it as she replied:

"About the first of September. That—let me see—that is Wednesday next. Do you not think, Mamma, we should begin our journey the day after to-morrow?"

Jeanie's letter is dated from Vienna, you know, and she could hardly fail to reach Baden before us."

"Poor Jeanie! So she has received none of our letters," sighed Alice.

A mournful silence ensued.

"Then," at last exclaimed the restless Alice; "in two days we shall look our last upon Lowerz. Do you know, Mag, I used to think we could never get you back to Scotland, your Polar bear had so wondrous a longing to carry you off to his mountain-den. He has it still, I verily believe, for when we had passed him in our walk last evening, he looked back, and *such* a look! Even my vanity could not appropriate, passing as it did quite over my head. Nay, you need not blush, for if the Count does think you a naughty flirt, you who first found his lost heart have certainly the right to use it as you will."

If Margaret had blushed, she was now pale enough. Mrs. Ross watched her anxiously. Sad and abstracted as was the face before, was there now an appalling terror, an agony of dread, that smote upon the mother. "Can it be possible," was her involuntary self-questioning, "that she does not love Harry?"

"Darling," she said, passing her hand caressingly over her daughter's hair; "lay aside your work and go take a walk or a ride. Your roses only bloom in the fresh air."

Margaret started, then brushing her palm across her brow, she rose, and moving as one in a dream, put away her work. Passing her mother's sofa, she stooped and left a lingering kiss upon her forehead. Then without a word quitted the room.

"Alice, your sister is not well," said Mrs. Ross.

"Follow, and ask if you shall go out with her. I must have time to think," she soliloquized. "But Herbert—he thought for her—he must be right."

But Margaret refused Alice's offer, and went out alone.

Swiftly she rode, to escape pursuing thoughts. On and on, caring not whither, till she found herself at the foot of the wooded hill, where one happy evening had been vowed a friendship already how changed! A bridle-path wound up the steep and skirted the lake, until precipitous hills towered into mountains, ranging north to Zug. A more sequestered resting-place she could not find, and an impulse led her onward to the spot where that broken bond was formed. She threw herself upon the turf, and tossing aside her broad-brimmed hat, looked round as one taking a lingering farewell of an old friend's face.

Two months ago she had been there for the first and only time. Since then, the forests had begun to don their gayest holiday attire in honor of approaching autumn. Crimson, gold, and purple gleams were on the lake, and higher up, beech and maple threw a sunset glory against the lofty gloom of pines.

Far more altered than the world without, was the world within. She thought with passionate grief of the dark change in herself, which darkened all the sunshine. She wept, she prayed. Moments might have passed, or hours, while she struggled thus resolutely with her heart. Formerly, she had shunned reflection—had yielded, passive, to fate. Now she weighed, and calmly after a while, each dread or hope, desire or fear, and judging between them, turned away from bright young Love, and cried to Duty, Be thou my guide!

Faint and worn, but strong now in the strength of right, she was rising to go, when a thought occurred to her, and opening the case of her watch, she drew forth the withered blossoms *he* had given. She touched them tenderly, lovingly, while she drew them forth, then crumpled them in her hands and flung them from her, slowly and deliberately, one by one. It was as if tearing away those chords in her heart which thrilled to their associations.

"Why are you destroying my flowers?"

Blushing painfully, she cast down her eyes. She knew that Count Zalkiewski stood beside her as he had stood that evening long ago.

"I come," he said, "a pilgrim to the shrine of Friendship, and lo! his priestess ruthlessly destroys his offerings."

Margaret, stung by his tone, raised her eyes. But she read in his that which belied the mocking words.

"You judge aright," he said again bitterly. "These are no ties of friendship. You do well to cast away, with my love, these its worthless tokens."

Still no reply from the parted, quivering lips.

"Nay, but you must speak to me. I can not bear this. Margaret, have you no mercy? Will you part from me without one breath of hope, of comfort? I have striven to be calm, to be proud, but come to you at last, a mere weak suppliant. A few short days, and you are gone. Shall I see you nevermore? Have I no hope, none?"

She turned upon him a white, grief-stricken face.

"Hush, hush," she moaned, "you may not speak thus to me. I may not listen."

She lifted herself up wearily. But all earth grew

black before her, and she staggered, blindly stretching forth her hands for support. He grasped them and forced her, dizzy with the whirl of emotion, to rest against his shoulder.

His very touch thrilled her pulses, and a flush dyed her cheek crimson. Still retaining her hands in his firm, strong clasp, he drew her to her seat, throwing himself at her feet. For an instant neither spoke nor moved, until she resolutely withdrew her hands.

He released them, intent upon her face, over which varying emotions swept with her changing color. At length, with slow determination, he spoke:

"Margaret, you love me. By those eyes' dear light I know it, and knowing it will never give you up. Speak not to me of bonds! What is so strong a bond as love? What so holy? What so eternal? You can not, you dare not, resist it! Mine is no light love, Margaret. None ever before held by another, none that may ever find repose in another. No love of the senses, though you are very fair to me, and your voice, your step, even the touch of your dress in passing, thrill me wildly. No love that may perish or grow cold. Have I not vainly struggled against its hopelessness since that hour on the mountain, wherein I recognized your noble woman nature? You have given me another life, warm, glowing, loving—faith in truth and virtue, hope. Will you shut me out from this life of love, crush me back to that despair? Will you, can you, Margaret?"

She had not once looked at him during this appeal, but now she raised her mournful eyes, and her voice was firm, as she replied:

"I will, I can do what is right to do. Hear me,

help me. I have told you how my faith is pledged. You have seen that he is good, true, noble-hearted. But you do not know that the day before my—my father—" her lip trembled, and tears gathered slowly, "went on that fatal journey to Uri, I vowed a solemn vow to keep my troth-plight. You have doubtless heard how Harry periled his life to bear me his dying words. But you know not what they were. These—my promise gave him peace in death, and as I value his dying blessing, even so must I fulfill my promise. Toward you I have been guiltless. Not so toward Harry. I never dreamed that you—I thought you my friend only—until that evening—after my promise."

"Tell me," he cried, "if you had known, would you have given that promise."

"It matters not now," she replied, averting her head. "There is now but one course for me. In your noble heart you know it."

There fell silence so intense that each might hear the quick breathing of the other.

Then Count Zalkiewski rose and turned away with folded arms, and eyes bent upon the ground.

"Go," he muttered hoarsely. "Go. You are very just and good. But you have never loved, Margaret."

She went to him, and laid her hand beseechingly upon his arm.

"I must indeed go," she said, "but I can not leave you thus. Ah! let us not part in anger! If it comfort you in aught, I will confess that—I love you, Ernst. And if it make the cup of sorrow sweeter to you, know that I—I, a weak girl, have drained it to the bitter dregs. For I love you, Ernst, and

from this hour shall see you, shall hear of you, no more."

She looked into his eyes fearlessly, although the color mounted to her brow. And those eyes at length yielded to the eloquence of hers.

"Brave, true heart," he murmured. "God forbid that I should make thee false!"

He held out his hand and she laid hers in it. One lingering clasp, and they were parted.

Margaret hurried on, crushing back all thought, all feeling, daring not to pause, until, loosing her horse to mount, she discovered that her hat had been forgotten on that well-remembered bank.

She retraced her steps perforce, venturing not to look up, lest in his descent she should see him whom she only prayed to see no more. For her courage was giving way before the blank future.

She threaded that labyrinth of trees, shrubs, and rocks, overawed, she knew not why, by its complete isolation from even the lonely road, only visible here and there far, far below. And she passed again beneath the towering cliff.

Ay, there he was, leaning upon the rock against which she had leaned, his arms crossed upon it, his head bowed down, his strong frame quivering with voiceless sobs, the fearful agony of the strong.

Motionless she stood, an image of despair, cheek and lip bloodless as marble. Her misery—her future—how sunk to nothingness it was! His, so desolate when she was gone! She could not go away, she had no power to move, no power to think what brought her there, though the hat lay at her feet. And impatiently at length he lifted his head.

"Margaret!"

The command, the entreaty, the passionate love the word conveyed, thrilled her into new life. Compelled by the stronger will, she threw herself into his outstretched arms.

Closely, closely, they enfolded her. Quick, burning kisses were showered upon brow and eyelids, while she lay mute and passive there. One hand of his clasped her, while with the other he put back the long bright tress which, fallen from the confining comb, rippled over her flushing cheek and gleamed golden in the sunshine.

"My darling, you are come back to me."

As one awakened from a dream, she started. She shivered, and her eyes unclosed with a wild and troubled gaze upon him.

"I had forgotten—I had forgotten— O my father; forgive me!" she moaned, struggling to free herself.

"My Margaret, you would not leave me?"

She laid her hands upon his shoulders, and looked into his eyes, earnestly beseeching.

"If you love me, Ernst, you will release me. Would you have me lose my father's blessing! Would you have me lie to God? I can not. I will not. Think you I suffer less than you? That my love is weaker than yours? It is strong to bear all things in its trust in your honor, your nobleness, your truth. Is your love less than mine, that you care not for my honor?"

He could not meet her gaze as he replied:

"Your words are vain. I will never, never let you go, without your promise to be my wife."

"That promise I will never give. Ernst, Ernst. God help us both, it is too late!"



"It is not too late. It shall not be too late." And he clasped her yet more closely.

"How dare you," she cried, drawing back with flashing eyes. "Am I then sunk so low? Let me go, lest I hate you."

He withdrew his arms. She trembled before the angry flush upon his brow, the relentless fire in his eyes. His nostrils dilated and his mouth was rigid when he spoke. The words, hardly louder than a whisper, were yet terribly distinct.

"We are parted no more. I swear it. You go hence with me as my wife, if you will. Give me your word of honor to ride with me now to Schwyz, to marry me there this morning, rescue or no rescue. Refuse, and what eye shall trace your way through these mountains to my castle in Zug—what ear hear your cry for aid—what arm tear you from me there?"

"You will not dare—" she gasped.

"You know that I will dare. A man desperate as I, dares any thing. Your promise. For you are utterly in my power. You can not hope to escape me."

She sank as if struck down by a sudden blow. She was powerless. So long, unconsciously, had her mind bowed itself to the sway of his, that it knew not how to stand erect, defiant. The god she had looked up to reverently, reliantly, was fallen, shattered, from that altitude, into depths of darkness lower than her shrinking gaze could fathom. Her strength fell with the ruin, crushed and broken. It was the ruin of the universe—the past, the future—earth an abyss and heaven a void.

She did not think, she did not will. She felt herself in the clutch of Fate, a poor shred, which the hag

broke off from the tangled skein of life, and cast away at the mercy of any shifting wind. For the winds all shifted since chaos reeled before her, and the good and the true were no more.

At length a hand touched hers, clenched together. She drew back, shuddering, and raised her head, bowed the while upon her knees. Her eyes met his, passionate as before, but determined withal.

She threw herself upon her knees before him, weeping. She prayed for mercy, she begged only a little time. But glancing up through blinding tears at last, she read an iron resolution in his averted face. She knew then that pleading was vain. She rose up scornfully.

"You require my word of honor," she said; "my honor is gone for evermore with yours. But my promise, which with my own will I never break, I give you. Take with it my utter contempt."

She swept past him, and refusing with a gesture his assistance, mounted her horse.

Side by side they rode on, exchanging neither word nor glance, until the road to Schwyz lay before them. Then Margaret suddenly reined in her horse and turned to Ernst.

"You did not really mean it," she cried. "Ah Ernst! tell me that you did not! You meant but to try me—or I have misunderstood you. You are noble yet, and true, my Ernst." She smiled upon him through her tears.

He would not look at her. He muttered:

"Your promise, Margaret."

The light died instantly from her face. Her eyes glittered as she almost hissed between her teeth:

"Then I shall hate you."

He did not reply, and she urged on her horse faster than ever. The few peasants they met upon the road stopped and looked after them admiringly. At a cottage door, as they passed, sat a buxom maiden at her spinning-wheel, and envied the gay lady with her gallant cavalier. None marked her white, white face, and restless eye, nor the scorn upon her lip.

These changed not, when before the holy altar the priest blessed this mockery of marriage.

Mechanically Margaret had gone through the service, scarce conscious of what was done or said. When the ring was on her finger, and husband and wife stood alone in the presence of God, united forever, yet how divided, she waved Ernst aside, and without a word entered the carriage waiting before the church.

It was a light barouche, with seats for only two, and as Ernst took the reins, Margaret shrank back in her corner.

"To Lowerz?" he asked.

"To Zug," she answered, without looking at him.

He drove rapidly, still much excited. Gradually the flush faded, his eyes lost their unnatural brilliance, and a dark and heavy gloom succeeded. He looked at his bride. She was leaning back with closed eyes which now and then opened to note the distance—never by any chance to rest on him.

He did not venture to speak to her. He began to fear she could indeed hate him. He began to hate himself for his ungenerous, cruel act.

Most unlike bride and bridegroom were the two who descended from the carriage at Egeri Castle.

No proud welcome, no tearful smile, but silently together they entered the cloisters.

There Margaret hesitated. She pressed her hand to her brow, bewildered.

"There is something I must do—I do not know—I can not think," she murmured.

Ernst turned aside. Intense remorse convulsed his features. After an instant, he said gently :

"Will you write?"

She bowed assent.

He led the way to the library, and placing for her a chair at a writing-table, laid writing materials before her.

She rested her brow upon her hand, and began to write. Slowly at first, and presently her pen stopped, and she sat gazing down vacantly upon the paper. These words, in faltering characters, caught Ernst's eye:

"Mother, I am—dead——"

He drew the paper gently away, replacing it by another. He took the pen which she had dropped with the ink yet undried, added the date, and threw the sheet into a desk upon the table.

"Margaret, you have not written," he said then.

She resumed the pen, and staying to collect her thoughts, wrote rapidly. When she had finished she pushed the paper toward him. He read, obeying her gesture:

"Mother, I am married. I dare not ask your forgiveness. I dare not call myself now your child. I can only say in extenuation, that I did not leave you this morning—this morning, an eternity ago—with a

Judas kiss upon your brow. Far from my thoughts was this marriage.

"O mother! write to me. Am I still your child?"

"MARGARET ZALKIEWSKI.

"Egeri Castle."

Ernst was deeply moved. He had expected her to tell all, and because she did not, he thought she had forgiven all. He extended his hand across the table. But she drew back.

"Count Zalkiewski," she said, with quiet decision, rising and standing erect, "between you and me there can be henceforward nothing more than the more bond of ceremony. A bond, cold and hard indeed, but of your own imposing. As I warned you of that before, I now warn you never again to forget the past—the past of to-day, I would say," she added, while a sudden spasm contracted her mouth, "any other past is forever past to me. The protection of your house you owe me now. The outward respect of a wife I owe you. More I can not give—more you will not require—I have yet so much confidence in you. Each has a separate burden, equally heavy, perhaps, and each must bear it separately. One in name, we are more widely parted by your own deed than by eternity of time or distance. But words are vain, we both know all too well." She laid her hand upon the note. "You will have the goodness to dispatch this."

Ernst rose also.

"You must allow me to send an explanation of—of— You must permit me to tell your mother all. She can not censure you."

She looked at him in surprise, replying proudly:

"You are my husband. If my heart and yours hold a secret which, revealed, would throw contempt upon the name I bear, they only shall hold it unto the end. That little part of a wife's duty, I, God help me, can perform."

Voice failed, and she sat down, covering her face.

He strode up and down the room in great agitation. Those bitter words found too true an echo in his conscience for aught of anger to awaken. His thought was of her when he came and stood beside her, bending over yet not offering to touch her.

"Can you never forgive? Could you know my anguish, my remorse, surely you would have some compassion. I would that I had died before this day. I would, even, that I should live a lingering death without you. Margaret, you shall go home to your mother, or I depart, an exile from your presence—any thing to bring back the smile to your lips, the light to your eyes again. Only tell me what you will, and, I beseech you, let your last word to me be of forgiveness."

His passionate words moved her not. She lifted her face. There was no relenting.

"What is done, may never be undone. Can you give me back my dead father's forfeited blessing? Can you restore faith in one whom I believed all noble? Can you give back the warm, the loving nature that was mine but yesterday? Idle now to think of what has been—idle and maddening," and again with a troubled look she pressed her hand upon her brow. "But my mother shall not think scorn of him whom I would reverence. Here is my home, since the marriage-vow is spoken. If I may not honor,

I can at least obey; and as I strive to keep this, may God forgive the part I can not keep. You ask me to forgive. I know not what is forgiveness. If it be a struggle to keep from hate, from detestation, you have it. It may be that in time I shall have so crushed down the bitterness, the horror, that overpower me at your approach, that I may learn to regard your presence or your absence with indifference. But in word or deed come not again between me and my mother. You have divided—you can not unite. By the wrong you have done me, I conjure you, attempt it not. And now, pardon that my words have been unwife-like. Never again shall you hear word of reproach from my lips. I have been thus explicit that I might not deceive you, nor you yourself. Henceforward, let the past be not once named between us."

She rose. Ernst opened the door for her, and summoning old Zozia, quietly introduced Margaret as his wife, with orders to attend upon her. Then, listening until the foot-falls ceased upon the stairs, he reëntered the library, alone with his remorse.

## XVI.

"AND life is thorny ; and youth is vain ;  
And to be wroth with one we love,  
Doth work like madness in the brain."

THE morrow, clear and bright, seemed but a bitter taunt to those whose morrows, farther than either dared to look into futurity, were so hopelessly clouded.

Margaret presided at the breakfast-table with a calmness and dignity the result of a sleepless night's struggles. Ernst, on the contrary, was absent and restless, flushing whenever she addressed him in her icy-clear tones, and answering oftentimes at random. There could be little conversation, of course ; few subjects from which both did not secretly shrink back, as upon the verge of some fearful chasm of memory.

While they lingered at table, Ursin entered to say that the Countess's maid had arrived from Lowerz, and had been shown up-stairs to the boudoir.

Margaret stood up as the servant went away. She held by her chair, breathing hard and changing color with such frightful rapidity, that Ernst sprang forward to support her. But her involuntary shudder at his approach repelled him, and he drew back while she, strongly mastering her agitation, moved away to the door



He, too, moved as if to follow. But the impulse was instantly checked, and up and down he strode, listening, at every distant sound, for her returning footsteps. In vain.

Meantime, Margaret had traversed the cloisters slowly, dreading to find reality yet more terrible than suspense. She paused with her hand upon the lock of her door, then opened hurriedly.

Luise came forward as her mistress entered, and kissed with warm devotion the extended hand.

"Did you not bring me a letter, a note?" Margaret's quivering lips could with difficulty falter.

"None, dear Fräulein—gracious Countess, I would say. But Miss Alice packed your trunks herself, and she might have put one in," she hastened to add, alarmed by the ghastly change in Margaret's face. "The trunks are in here, my lady," opening, as she spoke, the door into the dressing-room.

"One moment," Margaret rather gasped than said. "Are they going away—soon?"

"To-morrow, I believe; Frau Alison was packing when I came away."

"Very well," Margaret forced herself to say. "I will unpack, myself, Luise, and will call you when I want you."

The door closed between, she began with feverish impatience to examine her trunks, unfolding and shaking every article, lest perchance the letter might escape her. An undirected envelope lay in the tray of the last trunk she opened. She broke the seal. Inclosed was a large sum of money—her usual yearly allowance. That was all.

When at length the search had been repeated, at

first carefully, afterward despairingly, and the floor around was strewn with the contents of her trunks—delicate dresses, costly shawls, laces, jewels, books, heaped together in confusion—she yet knelt there, stunned.

Anger she had looked for—forgiveness hardly hoped. But to be cast off thus—to receive no hastily written line, even of rejection, in the trembling strokes of which her wistful eyes might have discovered some relenting—oh! that was too cruel, her heart clamored until she remembered how wicked to her mother, hers no longer, must seem the broken promise, the light faith, the disregard of her father's dying words. What wonder that the wrath surging up against her husband had need of icy bonds to keep it under?

After a time, she began listlessly to turn over her books one by one. It seemed such a weary while since she had touched them last. These, from her father, "to his wee Daisy," she could not bear to look at, but rose and laid them reverently apart. Those from Harry, over whose signature she lingered tenderly before arranging them upon a table near. One, her cheek flushed as she took it up, a copy of Faust—the name in it, Ernst L. Zalkiewski. Vividly before her thronged its associations. The rose-wreathed arbor with its vista of the lake, where Ernst and she had read together so many of those pages. That last, short morning, when he had explained to her a difficult phrase. She found the place. It was marked by a withered rosebud, and a slip of paper fell from between the leaves—a translation he had written for her of passionate words of Faust—words that now as she read this other, Margaret felt were not written for her eye alone, but for her heart to ponder.

She gazed fixedly upon that bold, free hand, writing she would have known among a thousand. She had thought it characteristic, and she felt it so still. To her, looking upon those lines for the first time, it was as if chancing upon the writing of a loved one dead long since, with years of misery between. And she hid away the volume, that no hand save hers might ever touch it.

A little time-worn prayer-book next, thrown down open at the title-page. Within, a childish scrawl: "To sister Madge, from Ailie." The words were dimmed by time, but beneath each was drawn a fresh line, of which the ink was newly dried, and at the end a blot—perhaps a tear fell there.

Margaret knew at once that Alice, commanded not to write, had chosen this means to assure her sister of her unchanged love.

Again and again was the page pressed to Margaret's lips. But still there came no weeping. Only the tearless eyes glittered more fiercely.

The day had closed, and sunset died away in the gloaming, when a dark figure emerged from the eastern tower, and gliding, looking neither to right nor left, across the lawn, began rapidly the descent of the winding stairs in the rock.

Midway, another step ascending might have been heard. But the dark ladye heard nothing, saw nothing, until a surprised "Margaret!" greeted her, and she stood face to face with Ernst.

"Go away," she cried vehemently, stamping her foot. "I will not be stopped. I will go. Don't dare to touch me—I hate you."

But he passed his arm around her, as she would

have sprung by him, down the steps. At her words he turned pale, but still held her, vainly struggling, in his strong clasp.

"You shall go, Margaret," lingering over the name with thrilling tenderness; "but not thus. Hate me you may—and I deserve even that—but I have a husband's right to guard you. You shall go home, now, immediately, but you can not go alone. Suffer me to take you there, and then if you—O Margaret, if you could but find it in your heart to say, 'I forgive,' before we part forever."

Releasing her, he stood gazing upon her as if for the last time.

She laughed a scornful, mocking laugh.

"Oh! we'll not part forever. No fear of that," and with a rush of desolate feeling, she remembered how he had closed against her any door other than his. "I am only going to Lowerz, on a short visit. If you will go, order the horses while I wait here."

She seated herself upon the steps.

Ere long, Ernst was driving her rapidly over the road to Lowerz.

She leaned forward, gazing wistfully on through the darkening twilight shadows, growing gloomier as they entered the stately forest arches. She was wholly absorbed in impatient longing, and did not speak until the lake of Lowerz lay faintly radiant before, the village lights gleaming among the trees, reflected red upon its surface. Then she turned to Ernst.

"You must go no farther," she said. "Remain here, and I will detain you but a moment. I shall be quite safe now. I thank you for coming."

She had recovered the calm coldness of manner

more sorrowful to him than even her angry outbreak, and hopelessly he watched her dark figure passing along the deserted street.

At the cottage gate, for the first time she faltered. The tension of nerve which had thus far borne her up now nearly gave way, and she trembled violently, struck with a great dread that made her fear to learn the worst. She faltered—but the next instant had flung open the gate, entering with the wind that tossed the dead leaves on the grass.

Down from the balcony, through the parlor lattice, streamed a light. Raising herself to a low bough of the embowering grape-vine, shrinking back into the shadow, she could see within.

Her mother had risen from the easy-chair upon the back of which she laid one hand while the other was in Harry's, who, flushed and excited, spoke. The mother's head was averted, but to the watcher without, the haughty, unmoved attitude was full assurance that Harry spoke to a deaf heart. Alice had thrown herself upon the sofa, her face buried in the cushions.

At length the mother spoke. Margaret's straining ear failed to distinguish one syllable uttered in those quiet even tones, but she saw Harry's dismay, saw Alice spring up, and, weeping bitterly, catching her mother's hands, implore. In vain. For, putting her gently aside, she replied, moving to take up a lamp from the table near Margaret's window.

"Alice, Harry, I command you say no more. I will not hear another word. Not lightly have I taken my resolution, and nothing shall shake it. I will never see her more. And I forbid you, Alice. After to-morrow it is not possible that you should meet. Hush,

my darling, she is unworthy your grief. Good-night, my children both."

She left the room with a steady step.

Alice sank again upon the sofa, striving with her now audible sobs, while Harry rushed out and down the stairs.

All this Margaret saw and heard. Could she have seen the mother's coldness melt in floods of weeping—could she have heard her own name moaned in the mother's troubled sleep—she would not have trusted to the cruel words, but would have knelt for pardon until her prayer must have been answered.

As Harry passed, Margaret cowered back like a guilty thing. But he saw the flutter of her dress in the moonlight.

"Margaret," he said, in a low tone; "can that be you?"

She came forward reluctantly, whispering:

"Harry, O Harry! can you then forgive?"

Her trembling pleading touched him deeply.

"Believe me, Margaret, I have never blamed you," he hastened to reply. "What you have done, I know was done without design, and therefore without guilt. But I loved you too well, Margaret, not to have released you, had you come to me."

"Oh! what shall I do? what shall I do?" she moaned, covering her eyes.

He gently drew away her hands.

"You must not despair," he attempted to comfort. "Remember, you have two always near her, who never forget you. Her own heart, too, pleads for you. She must, she will relent, when the suddenness is past."

Margaret shook her head.

"I have forgotten how to hope," she said. "But you, Harry, you will send for me, when—if she is ill at any time. Please God, I may be dead—but if I am not, then at least I may go to her. Promise me only that, dear Harry!"

"I will. You may trust to me."

"Tell my poor Alice—" she began

"Alice—you must see her. I will call her," he cried.

"No, no, you must not. My mother forbids. Stay—one moment."

She steadied her voice, and then went on:

"Tell Alice to love me. Pray her not to doubt me. Tell her I have her prayer-book. And may God in heaven reward you. Farewell."

"Surely you are not alone," he asked anxiously.

"No, not alone," and she grew hard again.

He walked beside her to the gate, and when he had opened it for her, he silently held out his hand. As she put hers into it, all the strong composure which had so long supported her, gave way, and the pent-up agony found relief in tears. Unrestrainedly she wept, and, repressing his own emotions, he soothed her with gentle comforting of sympathy and hope. By word nor gesture did he once recall to her a Harry other than her childhood's friend. And as such she thought of him, when at the gate they parted with a friendly pressure of the hands.

Ernst saw her tears falling quietly during her homeward drive. And he hoped again; not for himself, but for her whose peace was dearer far than his own. She was forgiven, he thought.

When two days after he heard of the English strangers' departure from Lowerz, he doubted. Mar-

garet was perfectly impenetrable on the subject, and he wrote to Mrs. Ross, directing to Baden. Again and again, as weeks rolled on, he wrote, demanding reconciliation as Margaret's right, declaring himself alone culpable.

No reply, however.



## XVII.

"Go, sit by the summer sea,  
Thou whom scorn wasteth;  
And let thy musing be  
Where the flood hasteth.  
See how o'er ocean's breast  
Rolls the hoar billow's crest;  
Such is his heart's unrest,  
Who of love tasteth."

AUGUST had passed away, and a September sunset was commingling with the silvery blue of the Egeri, and green and gray shadows of surrounding shores.

The husband and wife were together in the library. Margaret sat within a cloister window, her brow resting on her clasped hands and a volume open in her lap, but no page turned. Ernst bent over a desk, writing, raising his head occasionally, as time wore on, to gaze with self-reproachful compassion upon the drooping figure half concealed behind the curtains. As if the stillness had become insupportable, he rose and walked the floor restlessly.

"She sleeps, poor child," he said, pausing at length before her. "Happy indeed, were it for her if she slept forever."

Long he stood thus, listening to the regular breathing, watching the slight movements of the slumberer.

Once her lips parted in a sigh. He passed his hand across his eyes.

"Something must be done," he thought, "her grief grows heavier day by day. Something to arouse her from this crushing apathy. Oh! that I knew where to find her mother!"

A long tress, fallen from the massive twist, lay coiled upon her book. He stooped and raised it to his lips.

"Margaret, my Margaret, have I then lost thee forever?"

That instant he heard a voice without, saying gayly:

"In the library? This door? Nay, never mind, my good man—I'll announce myself."

The door opened and the speaker came forward with quick, light step and extended hands.

Ernst started. He raised himself erect and stared as one who sees a vision. He did not move nor take his eyes from her smiling face while she crossed the room to him. He held the hand she laid in his in both his own, tight, as though to convince himself that it was there, detaining it, a prisoned thing. He looked down upon her, still with the same half doubting, half wondering gaze.

"You are come," he said slowly, "at last, at last!"

"Then you really did expect me," cried the Baroness Waldien; "and after all Mademoiselle Alice wrote, though she said she would not, that I should surprise la belle mariée. She said, too, that you would be glad to see me. De grâce, bid me welcome, Monsieur! Say you are glad to see me."

How bright she was—her winning smile rendering her even brighter by its dimples and its gleam of white teeth.

At her first word, he had dropped her hand, drawing a deep breath as one rudely awakened in midst of a dream. She awaited an answer, and he said with evident effort:

"You are right, I have long looked for you. Far longer than you can know. Glad to see you? I——"

He quitted her side abruptly. Ostensibly, he did so to draw back the curtain which was hiding Margaret. The Baroness sprang forward.

"Qu'elle est belle! qu'elle est tout-à-fait charmante!" she exclaimed. "Ah mon comte, how you must be happy!"

His mouth contracted in pain. She asked:

"Wake her, Monsieur. I am all impatience."

"Go you and wake her," he replied.

He stood aloof while she put her arms about his wife, and softly kissed those lips he had kissed but once, and might not hope to kiss again. He saw the shrinking, indignant start before the eyes were fully open, given, he knew too well, with the thought of him. But when her eyes met Aimée's, right joyful was their smile.

"What! Aimée—Baroness Waldien!"

"None other. And you really are glad to see her? Mademoiselle, your sister, said——"

"Alice? When did you see Alice?" Margaret cried breathlessly.

"It has ten days, at Baden. She was pretty and fresh as ever, only a shade paler, she confessed in grieving for you. She could talk to me of nothing but you. And M. le Comte should hear," she added archly, "the description his belle-sœur gave to my Ludwig. But, quarter to his modesty!"

"Did you see Mrs. Ross?" Ernst asked, after waiting in vain for Margaret.

"To exchange bows, that was all. They left Baden immediately. But with Mademoiselle Alice I had a conversation. She told me that her married sister—not you, Marguerite—was with them."

"Where were they going?" Ernst asked again, perceiving that Margaret would put no question.

"This good-for-nothing memory of mine! I did not make much of attention, for sans doute, they will write. Mademoiselle Alice cried a great deal in speaking of you, Marguerite. Your first separation, n'est ce pas?"

Margaret bowed assent. She could not trust herself to speak.

"I told her," Aimée continued, "that Switzerland owes to be her home during one half of the year, and Scotland yours during the other. She said she would like it well, she was so fortunate in having one 'noble, true-hearted, high-souled gentleman, her beau-frère.'"

Involuntarily Margaret glanced at Ernst. Their eyes met. She rose quickly and moved to the farther end of the apartment, ringing the bell for lights in the twilight. When she turned, it was without a shade of embarrassment.

"A reason, Monsieur? Peu m'importe. I will not be refused," the Baroness was saying to Ernst; "mais si donc, if you shut her up here en prisonnière, she will be tired of you. It is thus that I tell to the cher Baron when he would have shut me up in his den in a corner of Bavaria. He followed my advice, and, par conséquent, I am not yet very tired, although it is now six years that we are married."

"And must you go to-morrow?" Ernst inquired.

"C'est cela même. My husband will be at Schwyz. He will be disappointed indeed, if I bring not you, Monsieur, and his belle écossaise. Here, Marguerite, come and convince this stubborn husband of yours."

"What is it?" asked Margaret.

"Understand. It must be that to-morrow morning you post for Munich with us. Hear my plans—*my* plans, for my lord and master never lords it over *me*," she hinted gayly, glancing toward Ernst. "Eh bien, our route—if you approve—is through Glarus, St. Gallen, and the Tyrol, staying ourselves on the way at our castle of Waldien. Après, a long, gay, happy visit to Munich. What says Madame la Comtesse?"

She said "Charming," faintly smiling.

"Bon! But M. le Comte has made objections. He dreams, perhaps, to have his own way and keep you here all to himself. Convince him, ma belle, of the utter futility of one such idea for all his life. Make him pass under the yoke, as I made my Ludwig. Comme ça!"

Lightly laughing, she drew forward the reluctant Margaret. And when she stood face to face with her husband, Aimee laid her hand beneath her friend's chin, playfully lifting thus her face to him. She took her passive hand and placed it in his. It trembled in his grasp like a frightened bird, and her color varied and the lashes quivered on her cheek.

He looked at her inquiringly.

The proud resolve that her friend should suspect nothing, induced her still to keep her face upraised.

Perhaps he misinterpreted the blushes there. Perhaps the touch of her soft mouth swept away the

weary weeks of estrangement. Perhaps he dreamed of reconciliation. For, still retaining her hand, he drew her to his breast, and his embrace was close as though naught divided them.

Aimée, before the mirror, had removed her bonnet and was engaged in smoothing with white and jeweled hand the dark braids so meet a setting to the dark and rosy face.

Therefore, husband and wife were, as it were, alone when he released her, and his eyes met hers, seeking assurance of forgiveness.

Instead, her lip curled and she flashed upon him scorn unutterable.

"Cruel, ungenerous!" she said, in a tone audible to him alone. And she moved to Aimée's side, laying her hand caressingly upon her shoulder.

Ernst turned abruptly and quitted the apartment.

## XVIII.

"I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheba, and cry, 'Tis all barren."

SOME thought such as this was Ernst's as he watched Margaret, and saw that ever she cried inly of her life, "'Tis all barren." It was possible that she might not, of the blossoming vales, the wooded, snow-crowned ranges, the peasant-life, of Switzerland and the Tyrol, where the scenery's romantic lights and shades soften the hard outlines of poverty and toil.

He could not reconcile Margaret's sudden, eager consent to his urging of the Baroness's invitation, with the dull indifference of a moment before. But consent she did, at the first earnest word from him. And eagerly consent, though, when Aimée had gone to her room, she stole out upon the cloisters, and he, coming suddenly upon her there, found her sobbing as though her heart would break. He would have spoken, but she rushed past him, repelling him with an angry gesture.

But she was bright as the sunrise upon Lake Egeri as the traveling-carriage rolled along beside its waters. The Baroness Waldien, confessedly very sleepy, lounged back upon the cushions, exerting herself only so far as to glance through half-shut eyes upon the dis-

tant jagged form of Mount Einsiedlen, or on the green graves of Morgarten, that garden of death wherein sprang up the tree of life for Switzerland. Margaret talked and laughed with what seemed to Ernst forced gayety. Until Schwyz was neared, and the fragrance of the churchyard pinks, blossoming again, wafted on the morning breeze.

Ay, there gleamed the church out from the elms that threw their shortening shadows greenly upon the stone wall and pathways winding between wooden crosses and quiet graves, one living mass of shaded pinks in grassy borders.

At the inn, Baron Waldien met delighted recognition from his former friend and ally, Margaret, and then the travelers were once more on their way.

Over lofty hills, through lowly valleys, beneath barren cliffs and across green pastures, beside the still waters of lakelets sleeping in sequestered glens, and beside the glancing cataracts of brawling mountain rivulets. An occasional glacier flashed back, in rays of blue and green, the sunshine. Far up green Alps, where distance veiled all muddy hoof-trodden surroundings, arose the solitary Senner-hut's moss-covered, stone-staid roof.

Noon was beginning to assert itself above the overhanging heights, when through a wooded defile glanced the little Glarus See. How quiet it was! The lake, like a great sapphire, gleamed darkly blue, now that the sun looked directly down upon it almost unshaded.

Now the mighty Glarnisch rises in the rear, and the town of Glarus rests below, while stillness is unbroken save by the far-off lowing of cattle, the tinkle



of their bells, or the drowsy repetitions of herdsman's jodel. Near by lie Glarnisch's grim thunderbolts, that centuries ago the valley's giant guardian flung down the steep descent, eight thousand feet, to awake the sentinel echoes.

A strange, weird town is Glarus. A walled city encompassed by rocky ramparts so mighty that even King Sol dares seldom venture in to contend with the shadows on the battlements, or cross the dark, cold, clear river, flowing all silently, a natural moat around. In the narrow, irregular streets, the hum of spinning-wheel and loom dispels the enchanted city, and many a comely rosy maiden or matron, or artisan in tasseled cap, gazes out upon the stranger from the low, massive entrances of those antiquated frescoed houses.

It was nightfall when they stopped at Netstall, and the inn was full to overflowing of pilgrims from Our Lady of Einsiedlen. It was but just after her fête, the fourteenth of September, and "the tables of the money-changers, and the seats of them that sold doves," were returning to their respective habitations. For the fête was a merry-making and a money-making, as testified the full pockets and empty booths of many a Glarus and farther away peddler. One peep into the beer-fumed, smoke-befogged traveler's room was all-sufficient for Baroness Waldien.

"Tout beau, tout beau," she exclaimed, drawing her husband away from his inquiries for the host. "Mon ange, I am not going to stay here to-night."

Baron Waldien, against whose stalwart, middle age his little Aimée resembled those fragile alpenrosen which love to nestle beneath the shelter of a gray mountain fir, listened with a good-humored smile,

softening the rugged features and the clear gray eyes, not quick, but steady and far-seeing.

"Alsdann, my dear," he said, "I suppose you are going to sleep in the woods."

"Still farther from my intentions. Cudgel your brains for a brighter idea."

"It is some distance farther to Mollis, Aimée, and I question whether we would meet with better accommodations."

Here Luise, who had been uneasily twisting the corner of her apron, and had opened her mouth more than once, as if to speak, plucked her mistress by the dress, and whispered something pleadingly.

"That is perfectly delightful, Luise," Margaret returned. "Aimée, it will suit you exactly, as you are so dissatisfied here. Luise wants to take us to her grandmother's. It is not far, and she promises a welcome warm and eatable."

Down in the narrow glen, among the mountains, falls a mountain river, brawling and foaming, and struggling through the rocks until it reaches a lake, a tiny, silver oval at the base of ranges that rise up straight on either hand, and throw here a high indented line, and there a truncated cone, upon the smooth mirror, and then open at the farther end a winding egress for the river. There is no carriage-way down the steep descent from the south, and, following Luise's directions, within a quarter of a mile of the cottage, the travelers alighted and pursued on foot the path the herds had trodden.

The way was rugged, and when Aimée presently claimed her husband's arm, Margaret was left beside Ernst, and could no longer refuse his assistance.

They crossed a rustic bridge, where the stream fell down from a thundering cataract into the lake, and awaited at the foot of a grassy crag, while Luise ran up to the cottage above to give warning and to reilluminate, for its only light was of the moon, glittering on the gilded tiles shaped and put together much like a fish's scales.

Margaret was standing, her arm within her husband's, looking from the pathway where the water glimmered at her feet, up through shimmery beeches and heavy-boughed pines, to the cottage on the crag above, and higher yet the steep wooded mountain-sides almost overhanging—so lonely, still, untroubled—and the full moon glancing through the net-work overhead. Something of the peace of nature was stealing over her heart, when in midst of her reverie came Aimée's low speech to the Baron:

"I like this traveling very well, so long as one has a good inn after a long day's travel, and can thus keep out of ken of poverty. I have such shrinking from the very sight of toil and hardship. There, you need not say a word," and she laid her hand playfully upon his lips. "I know just how wrong it is, and how silly, but, wrong or silly, it is the one lesson the past has taught me, and I take it for what it is worth. And I will—yes, I will—turn away from even the shadow of trouble, all my life long."

Margaret did not hear his answer. She felt only the start Ernst gave when "the past" left Aimée's lips. She withdrew from his arm her hand, for she could not control its trembling, and, helpless in the tumultuous rush of indignation, held for support by a tree beneath which she stood. A something cold met

her touch there, and, her self-possession already taxed beyond its powers, she sprang back with a cry.

All gathered round, and the moonlight showed, to her infinite mortification, the cause of her alarm—a large, unevenly-shapen stone imbedded in the trunk, where careful hands had kept the bark cut away. Margaret examined it with some curiosity.

"'T would seem to have a meaning," she said, "and yet this rough-hewn mass—no inscription—what can it be?"

"Possibly," replied Zalkiewski, "a charm, like the English horse-shoe before the door of country cross-road inns, to keep away witches who may yet be seen sailing through the air on their broomsticks away above this grand old pine and those larches that almost hide the cottage on the cliff. The peasants here are very superstitious. Even the familiar woodpecker and crow are evil omens."

"Ah! here is Luise; she can tell us. This stone, Luise?" said Margaret.

Luise looked, and raised her little dumpy figure upon tiptoe, and kissed it.

"My grandmother, gracious lady," she returned, "can tell the story so much better than I. Will you come in? She is both ready and anxious."

They climbed the steps worn in the cliff, and passing by the ground-floor devoted to wood, wagon, etc., entered the cottage by the entrance-stairs running up on the outside to the small balcony. A cheerful, ruddy glow gleamed from the great brick stove upon the wooden-paneled ceiling and walls gay with pictures from Bible and Swiss history—upon the large wall-clock with swinging pendulum and Holy Dove

beneath; the crucifix in that far corner, and amulets and gifts from pilgrimages depending there; the pegs above the bed, where were crossed a Russian sword and a French sabre, patriotic trophies of the French invasion; a massive gilded chest of drawers; the centre-table, above which a tallow candle in its wooden chain dangles from the low ceiling. Beyond, are dimly seen the large, dark, lofty kitchen, reaching to the roof, and the stairs leading to sleeping apartments over the family sitting-room.

Down these stairs, as her guests entered, came the stout, handsome, large-featured, heavily-built house-mother herself, and her kindly brown eyes and large-handed hospitality gave the warm welcome Luise had promised. As for the eatable one, she and Luise bustled about, she shaking the floor with substantial tread, while Luise tripped briskly, only stopping to hug some well-known wooden trencher in return for childhood's bread and milk, or to exclaim over that dear old bowl—bustled about until that was undeniably upon the table.

"Schabzieger cheese! What, is it here that it is made?" asked Margaret, as she sprinkled the grayish grated powder on her butterbrod.

The old woman had drawn her spinning-wheel before her as she sat in her arm-chair by the stove, and was plying it busily, when she replied with polite wonderment:

"Do you not know, gracious lady? Here grows that precious herb Ziegenklee, or, as some name it, Siebenzeit, for its flavor changes seven times a day. It is this which, ground and mixed in, gives the cheese its peculiar flavor and color. Though we can

get things from foreign parts, I care for nothing from beyond these mountains. The cheese and wine I make myself, for though Glarus is no vineyard, I have a sunny slope on which mine thrives. That tea grows wild in a glen in yonder range beyond the lake. And even that venison," she added laughingly, "doubtless I could say I made it myself after a fashion, for I found it in my dairy this morning, in place of one of my best round cheeses."

"In place of a cheese?"

"Ay, gnädige Gräfin. Some belated hunter, I wot, some armer Schächter, hungered as he journeyed, entered into my dairy, and bartered his good venison for my good cheese. You are surprised. Do they not thus everywhere? Our dairies are unbolted, and when one is in need, he eats and leaves his money in the dish."

"And what if he eat and leave no money?"

"But they do not so," she said, and lifted her eyes in mild surprise on Margaret.

"I have heard the proverb, 'Uri is the conscience of Switzerland,' but begin to believe it is Glarus. Good mother, I would fain live where, when we have a right to bread, we are not given stones—cold, hard, relentless, crushing to the earth," she made answer bitterly. Then quickly taking up her last word as a digression to thought, she continued:

"By the by, Luise promised you would give an account of one of these—a stone let in, as it were, into the great pine beneath the cliff."

"Luise might have told, lady, but she and Sänchen like well my stories of the olden time;" and she paused in her spinning to stroke lovingly the fair head laid upon her knee.

"Sänchen, I had forgot. Where is she?"

"Have I not told the Countess?" said Luise. "She was a Braut three months ago, and here in Glarus the betrothed must marry in three months. And so Sänchen is married and gone with Christian on his last peddler's round through Graubunden. After that, they are coming back to live with grandmother always. Else, liebe Gräfin, I might not go with you. But, grandmother, the story—" And she dropped her head again.

"It is not much of a story, gracious ladies," the old woman began, seeing the Baroness had pushed her stool back from the table, and seated herself on the long bench beside the stove, her elbow on her knee, her chin in her palm, in listening attitude. Ernst and his segar had betaken themselves to the lake-shore, where they might be seen wandering back and forth, and the Baron lounged at the open door with his meerschauum.

"It is not much of a story, gracious ladies; but my little maiden here is so proud of it that she loves the great old stone as if it had sense and feeling, for it was——"

"Ach! dear grandmother," interrupted Luise, "tell it as you were used to tell to Sänchen and me in the long winter nights."

She smiled and passed her large strong hand across the girl's hair as it rested yet upon her knee, and made a new beginning.

"How they strive!" she said, fixing her gaze upon the fire-glow, as though she saw a living struggle in the fierce onward sweep of the flames, the pallid wavering of the falling ashes, "how they strive and push

and struggle, there at the north gates where treachery has gained them access unawares, the Austrian hordes against that handful of free-hearted Swiss. Close and closer, hand to hand, and heart to heart, the staunch Swiss heart against the iron hand of Austria. To the fore the wrongs of centuries, the chains of the oppressor, rise—bulwarks, over which the free do battle, and the pitchfork and the Alpenstock beat down many a shining sword. Day marches by—its April clouds that follow in mourning weeds may weep above the brawling Linth, but they can not wash away the blood that mingles with its current. Shadows are closing in across the gorge—the bearded vulture darkles with them in the pines. And still five mortal hours Swiss hundreds hold at bay the Austrian tens of thousands, till Nature enters in alliance with her champions, and down into the rugged heights surrounding, down into the foeman's serried ranks, roll and crash, in thunders louder than artillery, great stones and loosened rocks, toppling down the Austrian pride, scattering broadcast death, disorder, flight. How they strive, and push, and struggle, away from the north gates, where faithfulness has gained the victory! How they throw down their arms, or use them but to cut a pathway through their panic-stricken columns—trample upon friend and brother—stumble in their headlong haste, and fall—and die. Fetters on these mountains! thus they spurn them. And the brave Landamman and his men, gathered from the cornfields and the pastures, armed with scythes and reaping-hooks, the stout ax of the forester, the cross-bow of the hunter, sweep downward like an avalanche from the heights where



they rose to Freedom's rescue, and, shoulder to shoulder with their brethren in the valley, rush on, and overwhelm the foe. When the moon looked down that night, she counted the Swiss dead by scores, the Austrian by thousands. And the rocks, grim gravestones in the gorge, had need of inscription none save that the foeman's gore had writ. Nafels is graven there in bloody characters."

"And my far-away grandfather," Luise hastened to put in, "was of the brave Landamman's band. That tablet in the great pine, dear Countess, he hurled down. And there is a deep red stain, a dark streak across—you may see it by to-morrow's sun. And he placed it there with his own hands after the battle. He is passed away, and generations after him. His cottage on this cliff has crumbled long ago, but this grand old pine remains his monument, and his children, tilling the same fields, building on the self-same crag, have guarded it from injury."

"This species—Siberian pine or alvier, is it not?—is very long-lived, I believe," said Margaret.

"It had need be, lady," replied the hostess. "For it grows but a span in five or six years. It is a priceless tree to our mountains, durable for building; these walls and ceiling are paneled with it."

"Oh! then, that is the faint delicious fragrance I have been observing ever since I came in," Margaret interrupted.

"Which hardly diminishes with centuries. Then too, its branches furnish winter fodder, and the seeds, which soon we will begin to gather, are the great delicacy of our winter festivals. We are a contented people, though strangers call our mountains barren.

And if one is industrious and has luck; if he have money in his pocket when first the cuckoo greets the spring; what with our tea and slate, our crops of flax and rye and barley, the hay of which one gathers a hundred pounds a day beyond the chamois' reach; the winter spinning and the weaving, and dyeing, one can live and add a bit of land for children who come after. I was not born in Glarus, and I still wear the costume of my native beloved Zug," she added, glancing down upon her green petticoat and red stockings; "yet methinks nowhere are the dance and the merrymaking, the Ranz des vaches, and the song of the reapers in the harvest, one half so blithe as here in cheerful Glarus. That may be because it saw my blithest days," and she sighed softly; "for my seliger Mann was Glarus born, and lived, and died, and sleeps with his fathers here."

As Margaret listened, to her memory recurred Luise's long-forgotten story of that cave in Zug. She pushed back her sleeve. Yes, there was the ominous cross, a dark line just threading the round, white, taper arm. She looked, scoffing at its broken charm, scoffing until a thought flashed upon her and dashed the color from cheek and lip—that at the marriage altar she had yielded up that hand, and, of course, the cross it bore, into the keeping of another. She sat staring down upon it with stony gaze—a gaze taking in not it alone, but all the full past, all the empty future.

A call from Baron Waldien roused her, and throwing over her head a shawl, caught up in passing, from the bench where sat his wife still in the same attitude, but fallen perfectly asleep amid Nafel's thunders, she

went out to him, perching herself upon the balcony railing, while he, puffing away at his meerschaum, leaned with his back against the cottage wall, and was soon deep with her in metaphysics, or aloft among the starry host.

Presently Ernst came up the stairs, and without word or look to Margaret, entered. No longer was she an attentive listener. For the sound of a measured tread up and down, pauselessly up and down the room, jarred through the Baron's speech. Nay, not pauselessly. Once it staid, and Margaret, slightly changing her position, glanced through the tiny, oval-paned window. No one within save Ernst and Aimée. He stood before her, looking down upon her as Margaret had ere now beheld him, a troubled, proud, indignant look, yet withal of yearning tenderness. Suddenly, as her regular breathing gave assurance of profound slumber, he stooped, and upon the dark waves above her brow he left a kiss unfelt.

And again that restless, measured tread.

Sunrise found our party following the river's northward course.

The road winds now beneath a fore-alp, and adown the smooth, close-shaven slopes descends a procession. The Senne, in festival array, milk-dipper, sceptre of his sway, on shoulder, trolls the Ranz des vaches, till the echoes ring it joyously again. Follow after, three or four the handsomest of his goats. And next, the tinkle of smaller bells chiming in with that she wears, with conscious pride upon her embroidered leathern band, the largest, finest cow, well-established, undisputed leader in the pastures, leads the row of sleek

kine, a bull with garlanded milking-stool on horns bringing up the rear—all marching as the Ranz des vaches, or Kuhreihe—cow-row—signifies. A troop of youths and maidens, gay and flower-wreathed, are following the sled which transports the dairy utensils, and away they go to fun and frolic, whey and curds, in the home-place below in yonder glen.

Onward still our party, following the river's course, until, through a break in the mountain chain, the sunset skies and the Wallen See appear. There it lies, twelve miles in length, and three in breadth, everywhere—north, south, east, west—cliffs rising perpendicularly to the very heavens. Gaunt, stern walls of rock, crested with darkly-tossing pines, giving at intervals in their precipitous descent but precarious support to tree and shrub, and festooning vine glowing with scarlet berries. And here and there are waterfalls leaping joyously down to rejoin the waters that have wandered from them below, or trickling slowly and tearfully, regretting their forsaken springs.

The sun was setting when the boat pushed off from shore, manned by two picturesque peasants who, sad and wild from time to time, with scarcely moving lips greeted the silence with the familiar Kuhreihe. "Silence was pleased," doubtless, for yet more tranquil was her reign when Murg and her opposite neighbor Quinten fell behind. The sunset pomp paled in the heavens. It found little sympathy in the dark depths reflecting darker heights. But the stars, pale-shrouded in white drifts, and the full moon, silvery at first, but gradually shining golden, as wore on the four or five miles to Wallenstadt, the night's haven of rest, by and by glorified the waters.

Bright to look back upon, despite the gloom overshadowing her life, was the ensuing week to Margaret. Switzerland and the Tyrol, their constant changes of mountain and valley, of river, lake, village and ruins, shut out from her mental vision for a time, a lonely mountain and a village church. And while the past was banished, she could enjoy every thing. At the way-side inn, at the close of a fatiguing day, none acquiesced more cheerfully in the discomfort, nor did more credit to the peasant fare, even horrifying Aimée by relishing the seeds of the Siberian pine. None so won the hearts of all by kindly interest in the chubby little ones, in the in-gathered harvest, or the favorite tradition. And often, when riding beside her firm friend the Baron, she watched from some grand height the peasants in their costumes of vivid coloring, flitting far below like butterflies across the fields—or gazed upward from the winding valley road to where the mountaineers, holding by one hand with grappling-irons to the face of the precipice, reaped in wild glens amid seemingly inaccessible cliffs the rich crop of hay—or chatted with some light-hearted Sennerin, standing sunburnt, stout, and rosy, among her cattle, resting perchance a plump arm upon the neck of a belled and ribboned favorite, then, if Ernst were not near, Margaret's laughter would ring out with almost its former lightness.

Ernst saw this, and but seldom darkened her enjoyment with his presence.

The Baron also saw it, and his kindly scrutiny sometimes troubled Margaret.

## XIX.

“ Dem Eichwald brauset,  
Die Wolken ziehn,  
Das Mägdlein sitzt  
An Ufers Grün,

Es bricht sich die Welle mit Macht, mit Macht,  
Und sie seufzet hinaus in die finstre Nacht.”

LAST night our travelers slept within the borders of Bavaria, at Mittenwald, where the “Iser rolling rapidly,” is a babbling rivulet.

This evening, as the western mountains glow in the sunset, they are following the road that lies for several miles between the lakes Kochel and Waldien.

Turning off from this public way, to the east bank of the Waldien, they ride for another mile beneath the shadow of the mountains.

Anon they near a broad and lofty table-land beneath loftier cliffs. Terraces here sweep down to the very verge of the lake, which, almost equal in length and breadth, is at this point four miles wide. Crowning this table-land is a château of white marble, with spacious porticoes supported upon Corinthian columns. Far above this and the surrounding labyrinths of avenues, groves, gardens, fountains and pavilions, upon an overhanging crag, a magnificent old castellated

ruin even in decay seems strongly to command the region beneath.

And this is Baron Waldien's "old den"—yon château, the modern Castle Waldien.

Margaret stood at her chamber-window in the night. Restlessness possessed her, unsoothed by the quietude without. She was watching a red sparkle of light, glimmering glow-worm like, amid the trees, and a dark form, restless as herself, wandering to and fro.

After a time both disappeared, and then she yielded to her longing for air and motion, and, unfastening the window, which opened to the floor, she stepped out upon the portico. She passed noiselessly on and down the marble stairs, to the lawn.

From terrace to terrace she descended rapidly, striving in the wild paths to lose and leave behind the wilder thoughts that would not suffer her to rest. Yet, constant still, they followed.

She gained the beach at length, and there paced up and down with unquiet and uneven steps. Now with drooping figure she walked on, and in the moonlight great tears fell. Then the bowed head was raised defiantly, and she dashed the tears away, as anger conquered sorrow.

A barren mass of rock overhung the lake. Driven by yearning unformed to thought, she ascended this, and stood there, looking down into the deep, dark waters moaning and writhing at her feet.

All earth seemed to her to suffer. The wind, descending in gusts down from the pine-crowned heights, struck upon her heart in dull sympathetic wail. The skies were darkening with approaching tempest, and

the moon there gave but tearful radiance. But the waters, the storm-tossed, fettered, unquiet, moaning waters, they muttered to her heart that even such it was. She wondered vaguely whether beneath the surging waves the depths were very quiet. And she leaned forward, spell-bound.

Through drifting clouds the moon streamed down upon the girl, a very statue of despair. Her hands were loosely clasped together, and the wind flung the heavy tresses, unbound, over her white robes.

She started as a touch was laid upon her arm, and turning saw Ernst. She shook off his hand impatiently, but shook off with it the spell which the waves had flung around her.

"Forgive me," Ernst said, "but you did not hear my call, and the storm increases so rapidly that there is danger in remaining here."

The pent-up feelings would have vent at last.

"Why did you then disturb me?" she cried vehemently. "Why did you not leave me to that danger? Do you imagine life is any thing to me? Do you dream that I have wish or hope, excepting death? Do you dream that if I dared to pray—I, false as you have made me—I could pray for aught but death—death—death?"

"God forgive me!"

She heeded not his broken moan. She heeded not the agony in his eyes, but stood trembling in her passion until he spoke again:

"Margaret, come."

"I will not. Leave me."

He hesitated. Then, before she could comprehend the sudden movement, he drew her arm within his.



She felt the futility of resistance, and suffered him to lead her on toward the château.

Quivering in every limb, she moved on. Meanwhile the clouds grew denser and rain fell in torrents. Ernst looked hastily around for shelter. It was near at hand, a pavilion gleaming white against the black shrubbery. But Margaret lifted her tearful eyes.

"Ah! let us go on to the Castle," she implored.

"I can not," he answered firmly. "If you will not care for yourself, I must. The violence of the storm will soon pass away. Do not fear lest I intrude upon you."

She withdrew her arm without reply, and entered. Ernst stood at the entrance watching the clouds, until a suppressed sob smote upon his ear. The vivid lightning flashed on Margaret, who had thrown herself upon the floor, her face hidden on her knees.

He could not resist the impulse that led him to her side. And the long suppressed, enduring love and compassion in his heart, moved him to lay his hand softly upon hers, as he had done the day he saved her life—so long ago.

A sharp shiver ran through her frame, and she drew away. He saw even in the uncertain light that she grew whiter than before. She gasped for breath once or twice, but when she spoke it was with quiet dignity.

"You forget. I blame you not, for I myself was wandering to the past again. This can not be. There is that between us which may not be forgotten though forgiven. Let us not awake the restless ghost of the past. The present holds enough of misery for both. Two hands bound together, and a heart another holds," she went on bitterly. "But no more. My hand may

never touch yours without a shuddering recollection of the hour when they were clasped in marriage, in violation of all truth and honor."

"Margaret, Margaret—when you withdrew your hand from mine the first glad day we met, it was not thus."

"Not thus—not thus— O Heaven!" she moaned, "I loved him even then."

And in uncontrollable weeping she covered her face.

He perceived that in her anguish she forgot his presence. He doubted not an instant that the love for which she wept had now but a grave within her heart.

When the storm had calmed, and they stood in the portico together, she said tremulously:

"Let us be at peace with one another."

He bent over the hand yet resting on his arm—then turned away.

## XX.

"THE coming day  
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,  
And all the village-train, from labor free,  
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,  
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,  
And sleights of art and feats of strength went round."

"ETES vous des nôtres to-day, Marguerite?" asked Aimée, tapping her on the shoulder. "I am enchanted that we arrived at Munich last evening, for to-day is, you know, our great Volks Fest, and as this is your first sojourn here, you will amuse yourself to go to the fête with all the world of Munich."

Margaret turned from the ivy-bowered window from which she had been watching, interested, the crowded street.

"I was just thinking," she said, "that if all the multitudes filling this beautiful Ludwig street were church-going, it spoke well for the devoutness of Munich. But what is this festival, Aimée, and why did you not tell me before?"

"Plait-il? Pauvre petite, did you not know? It is an established fête held annually on the first Sunday in October, the omission of which would create as dire a thirst in the hearts of the gayety-loving Münchener, as the suspension of the breweries could in

their beer-loving throats. There are races in the presence of royalty itself, and peasants from the mountains and the plains, in their holiday costumes, will, perhaps, prove a greater attraction to your uninitiated eyes, than all the assembled *élite*."

"Oh! let us go. When and where is it to take place?"

"When! at noon, so that we will have but time to dress and set out so soon as our lazy lords shall be pleased to make their appearance to breakfast. Where! in the Theresien Meadow, without the city. Ludwig—ah! le voilà qui vient. Mon ami, have you forgotten the October festival, or do you mean that we should miss it while you indulge in dreams?"

"Gar nicht," good-humoredly replied the Baron, advancing; "but I believe you ladies dispense altogether with sleep. Traveling until ten last night, and bridged as possible before ten this morning. Though the Countess, it must be confessed, is somewhat pale. What have you done with your bloom this morning?"

"Precisely what I've done with my good-humor, Louis," interrupted Aimée, "pocketed it until after breakfast. Romancists are in error when they depict heroines wandering in search of adventures, amiable and lovely at the unconscionable hour of dawn, as if amiability had been refreshed by a cup of good coffee, and a smoking petit-pain. Hans, let us have breakfast immediately," she added, as the servant appeared in answer to the bell. "Marguerite, I think we'll venture to treat the Count without ceremony."

"And so you have never seen a Volks Fest," the Baron said to Margaret, when she had seated herself

at table. "Have you then no annual festivals in Scotland? And what becomes of your peasantry?"

"Our lower classes are not so gay as yours, but they are contented and happy. Our Highlanders would not exchange their own rugged work-a-day mountains for all your festive holidays."

He looked admiringly at her flushed face and sparkling eyes.

"It is sun-clear," he said, "that you have mistaken your vocation. Are you not a destined mountain-nymph? Or are you one in disguise, or an Undine astray from your streamlets?"

She had raised her head, with a merry reply upon her parted lips. But suddenly the light vanished from her eyes, and she sat silent, drooping them. The door opened and Ernst entered.

"We have taken the liberty of sitting down to breakfast without you, for it is our October festival, and we are going to the Theresien Meadow," Aimée said apologetically, after the exchange of good-morrows, as her guest took his place beside his wife.

"The October festival! I had quite forgotten. It is so many years since I last saw it celebrated."

"Then you have visited Munich before," the Baron said.

"A five-year long visit."

"You have acquaintances, friends, here?"

Ernst smiled, one of his own rare smiles, a stranger to his eyes for many a weary day.

"Friends, one or two," he replied. "But you would vainly seek them in the noble array of Vons, Barons, Counts, or Princes. In old Munich, close by the time-decayed Sendling gate, is a neat little bakery presided

over by a neat, little, rosy, smiling old woman. That is friend number one. Others, two or three nameless artists, I can no longer trace."

The Baron appeared surprised—Aimée really horrified, though politely desirous of concealing the fact.

"An exiled Pole," Ernst added, looking at her fixedly, "has friends nor rich nor many. However, the few who do not shrink away, are true. And many a careless, gladsome hour, unpurchasable by the wealth of Ind, was mine in my free artist-life. Money is the least good."

"Oh! oh!" cried Aimée. "And what do you call the greatest?"

"Hope," he said quietly.

"Et vous, Marguerite?"

"Fortune is lavish in her gifts, and comparisons are invidious," she replied with latent irony.

"No evasions, Madame. Bring her to confession, M. le Comte. It may be she thinks you the great gift. Truly, no small one." Aimée laughed.

"It is Honor," Margaret answered, seeing that an answer was expected.

"What, before love?" cried Aimée.

" 'I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not Honor more! ' "

she replied in a tone sinking almost to a whisper.

Ernst cast one hurried glance on her averted face, and colored violently.

"Love without Honor," began the Baron, pushing away his plate, and folding his arms deliberately upon the table.

"Ach! gracious Baron," Aimee exclaimed, and rose

in playful haste. "Do not, I pray you, whelm us in the bottomless swamp of those dreadful metaphysics. I will both love and honor you if only you will order the carriage. Allons, mes amis, have you forgot the fête?"

In a handsome barouche they were driving at noon toward the Theresien Meadow.

The sun shining clear and bright from a cloudless deeply blue October sky, glows upon buildings rich in rainbow splendor or softened into neutral shades, contrasted by occasional gleams of white. Many of the house-fronts are frescoed in medallions, groups or landscapes in clear relief against a background of deep blue crimson, or fainter tint. Within as without almost every window clammers ivy, sometimes suspended in swinging baskets of every style and hue, according to the inmates' taste, or want of it.

On passes the carriage, through various throngs of vehicles and hurrying equestrians and pedestrians. Margaret gazes around with eager interest; here, upon a group of students in brilliant tri-color caps and badges; there, upon a cluster of mountaineers, a family in-coming, apparently—the father and mother, arm in arm, any number of curious, joyous children, staring about open-eyed and open-mouthed, and in the centre the cheery grandmother in deep-blue petticoat and gray cloak, her silver hair folded smoothly back beneath the silver, swallow-tailed Munich cap. She is leaning proudly upon the arm of a young girl who stands in bashful confusion, her cheek glowing and her left hand nervously twisting the silver chains crossed and recrossed upon her black bodice, while her right is clasped within that of a

young man wearing the green peaked hat of the mountaineer, decorated with chamois beard and tuft of black-cock feathers. Margaret formed a rustic romance of this, reverting to her simple idyl, until a crowd of peasants from the plains shut out the view. These, with their long, short-waisted coats, low broad-brimmed hats, and umbrellas many-hued, were yet quaintly picturesque in contrast to the mountaineers and the gayly-costumed Munich populace. .

The carriage drove through Ludwig Strasse, where it widens into the Odeon Square and terminates at Feldherren Hall. At Margaret's request, Schwanthaler Street was traversed, past brilliantly-painted houses, past the white quiet studios of Von Schwanthaler, the great sculptor, and designer of the colossal Bavaria which has since been erected on the Theresien Meadow.

And now the city is left behind and the Theresien Meadow lies before. Tents, flags, and royal canopy of white and blue, Bavarian colors; green wreaths and bowers of spruce fir environing the race-course and the seats and platforms reserved for the nobility; gay crowds and gayer processions of wagons laden with *chefs-d'œuvre* of nature or of art; and the Art-King Ludwig graciously distributing prizes, while music fills the air. And the meadows are gleaming in autumnal flowering, the groves in foliage, gold and crimson, the distant Alps blue as the clouds among which they stand.

The ceremonies concluded, with a most enthusiastically vociferous "Lebe hoch!" for the king, the throng diminished, yet leaving thousands to the delights of beer and coffee-bowers.



"It is so charming a day," said Aimée, as her carriage followed in the departing crowd, "that what say you, Marguerite, to spending it in rustic fashion, driving along some pleasant road, and dining, or rather lunching, at some one of the genre of our suburban villages?"

A fitting close to this gala of new sights. It would——"

A start and sudden pause ensued. Aimée turned in the direction of Margaret's gaze. Pressing on close behind her carriage was another, in which sat two well-dressed young ladies, and facing them two gentlemen.

"Stop!" cried Aimée to her coachman, adding to Margaret: "There are the Von Amsels, Käthe and her brother's wife, both intimate friends of mine. You must know them."

"Not now," Margaret whispered hurriedly. "I—I——"

But it was too late. The Von Amsels already recognized the Baroness, and in another instant had driven up. The gentlemen alighted; one, arrested by Aimée's exclamation of delighted surprise, stopping beside her with an air of lazy *nonchalance*, following his friend furtively while he came round to the side where sat Margaret, and Ernst opposite.

"I came here a week ago with Falkenstein," said Mr. More—for it was indeed he—in answer to the Countess's questioning. "I can not do justice in words to my delight at your arrival. It is so fortunate we did not leave town yesterday, as he wished. I find it very agreeable, but he is so confoundedly restless and unreasonable—if he were only ordinarily

civil to mortal women—should think the immortal god had something to do with it—can hardly hold him down to one place for two days at a time, except at Vienna while Miss Alice was there. However, since Munich has received such an accession of attractions, Falkenstein shall no longer drive two-in-hand, save up and down Ludwig street. Now if only my ally, Miss Alice, were here, we might da capo Lowerz.”

Margaret flung back her vail with a careless fold shielding her face. Not before Ernst had caught the gleam of tears rushing to her eyes.

“And how is Miss Alice?” Mr. More next inquired. “Of course she wrote you of our meeting last month at Vienna, where they went to meet your sister, Mrs. Campbell. Mrs. Ross was much better before I left. I urged May for authority, to go for you during her illness, but he said Mrs. Ross would not permit. I presume through fear of unnecessarily alarming you, and really it was unnecessary. May said he would himself go for you if she became worse.”

“Was Mrs. Ross then really very ill?” Ernst asked, observing Margaret’s varying color, and her total inability to speak.

Count Falkenstein came up at that moment, and, hearing the question, answered it to Margaret, as she gave him her hand:

“Not seriously, but still there was cause for anxiety. I confess I thought them mistaken in withholding the tidings from you; but Mrs. Ross was so decidedly convalescent before I came away, that there is no longer cause for apprehension. Mademoiselle Alice told me they would in all probability winter in

Italy, going first to Naples. Have you heard from there, Countess?"

No reply, but a faint struggle for words, a low cry, and she must have fallen had he not caught her in his arms.

"Ay, claim her, she is yours now!" he muttered fiercely between his teeth, as Ernst started up, pale with fury.

And withdrawn apart, he watched while her head fell forward on her husband's breast.

Thick-coming thoughts pressed upon him as he watched, his hat low upon his brows shading his face, his right hand clenched upon his shoulder, where he still felt the light pressure of her head that for one moment had lain there. In his memory, to the exclusion of all present sounds, rang the few words of faint encouragement she had given him that evening, when, in the sunset, they floated on together to Schaanau. Every soft smile or gentle glance to him, shone gentler, softer, through the haze of memory, until he could almost believe this the fulfillment of the Lady Magdalena's story, the end of which he had said he knew not. The end? He would not think of that. She had clasped the golden fetters, he said, and broken the white rose-buds from the Garden of Love, and, perchance—perchance—she was now straining her eyes in the darkness, looking back for their fair gleaming. A flush of triumph surged to his brow at the thought. Not one ray of pity for her. In truth, he would at that moment have seen her lie gasping her last breath there at his feet, rather than rise up the living, loving wife of another. He remembered not bruised flowers never bloom again. He remembered

not their trampled whiteness could be white no longer. He did not waste one glance upon the future. He only saw that lovely face grow pale, that bright head droop, at his approach. So madly exultant was he, that only the anxious throng between deterred him from striding forward, dashing down in contempt any such barrier as a husband, and claiming her his own.

So he stood there, his hand clenched tighter on his breast, his breathing hot and hurried.

Who shall say that in the midst of his alarm, Ernst felt no thrill of joy, thus clasping his darling, her head pillowed on his shoulder, her pale cheek pressing his supporting arm?

It was not long ere she regained consciousness, and for a moment yet lay motionless, breathing low and irregularly. Ernst knew that she was struggling to keep back the tears welling up beneath those closed lids. He knew not the something else that kept her there so still—the unconscious comfort of his sympathy.

She roused herself at length, and gracefully thanked the thronging strangers for their proffers of assistance. It was but a foolish alarm, she said to her friends. Mr. More had spoken of a past illness of her mother, of which she was ignorant—and this was her first separation.

Falkenstein heard her explanation, but he heard too her faltering tones, and he saw that she colored and shrank from his intent gaze.

"You are not going back to town?" half queried Mr. More of Aimée.

"We did intend to ruralize to-day," responded Aimée; "but, Marguerite, we must postpone our drive. You are yet tant soit peu pale."

"No, no, indeed. I am perfectly well, and wish so much to go," Margaret hastily replied.

"I entreat you, do not," her husband said.

With averted eyes, and in a tone too low for any else to hear, she made answer :

"Let me go. I must have excitement. I should go mad if I dared stop to think."

There was no reproach in the voice, there was at that moment no reproach in the heart which thus gave utterance, and yet it struck as such on that on which it fell. He had bent forward to speak to her, and he did not drop his eyes from her lowered lashes, but winced as though she had roughly bared an unhealed wound. He said :

"It will do her no harm, Aimée."

"Bon! And we will see you this evening, Mr. More?"

"Unfortunately engaged to Madame Von Amsel," was his aside.

"Ingrat! To-morrow, then. Mme. Von Amsel, and you, Käthe, you are held engaged to dine with us to-morrow. Now, Max, the party is for you, exprès, so don't go off on any of the absurd wanderings you have been so given to lately."

Falkenstein started and hesitated, looking at Margaret.

"Do not fail to come," she said anxiously, thinking of the many questions she might ask of those loved lost ones—questions which faltered upon her lips as she caught Ernst's glance.

"Auf wiedersehen, then," he returned, abruptly lifting his hat and going back to his post of duty in the Von Amsel's carriage.

Away the others sped, until, half hid amid orchards where boughs drooped low beneath the rich legacy of summer, lay a village. Upon the outskirts stood its church, surmounted by pale green spire and steep roof of many-colored tiles, yet solemn and majestic enow in gray ivy-clad walls and Gothic windows.

They found the doors open according to custom, but no one was within save an old woman, but just returned from the fête, kneeling before the shrine of a favorite saint, her shriveled, toil-worn hands crossed upon the orange kerchief folded over her shoulders.

Here was none of that tawdriness too frequent in these village churches. A stone-colored wash replaced the common white, and the sunshine fell dimly through simply painted windows upon gilded gallery and altar, which else might have been too gaudy.

Aimée, crossing herself, sank upon her knees beside the peasant, and Margaret knelt apart, striving to raise her thoughts, bound in earth's deep shadow of grief, up to the glorious White Throne. She could find no words wherewith to pray, but all her soul arose in voiceless agony.

Suddenly, from above, thrilled a low burst of music, filling the silent aisles with melody. Margaret turned not, nor raised her head bowed upon her clasped hands, while solemnly poured forth the *De Profundis*. She knew those the rich tones of the organ, and a clear, sweet voice accompanying. Yet it was to her no earthly music, rather an answer from on high to her despair. And when triumphantly arose the words, "But there is mercy with Thee," they echoed in her heart as though an angel's voice had reassured her.

The music ceased, and all eyes turned toward the

gallery, seeking the singer. A light footfall was heard slowly descending the stairs, and presently appeared only a delicate, fair-haired boy. Could this possibly be the musician? "Yea," he answered modestly, twisting his slender fingers together in embarrassment, and never once raising his eyes from the ground.

"And hast thou not been to the great Fest—not seen the races?" Margaret asked pityingly, when the child explained that he had left the little sister at play in the church-yard, and had gone up into the gallery to sing, as oftentimes he did.

A smile somewhat sad passed over his face.

"The lady does not then see that I am blind?" he said, lifting for the first time the sightless balls, a soft bright blue, revealing only by a vacuum of expression the darkness within.

He told his simple story. He was one of the choristers, and the good Kapellmeister had taught him all he knew of music. And with a proud smile, he said he had already three piles of kreuzers, all his own earnings by singing in the church, and which he was noarding to surprise his mother with some day. For she, though mistress of the village inn, had not always a great deal of money.

Margaret looked at Aimée. She smiled and nodded in response, and very soon a fourth pile of coins far eclipsing in value the other three together, was put into the hands of the delighted child.

Leaving the church-yard where the little sister played hide and seek with a merry tribe of village children, behind the wreathed wooden crosses, among the tall unmown grass, the boy led the way to the inn, where the garden was gay with sunflowers and dahlias, and

peasant groups beneath the trees, and the inn's pink walls glowed rosily through a perfect grove of rosy apple-trees.

Years after, when the child-musician had wandered on in life's journey out of sight of all save one of that party, a blind musician, led along in the hard, upward climb of genius, stood upon the heights at last, and gratefully acknowledged the helping hand once extended and never withdrawn, by that stern and silent man who withdrew that day somewhat aloof from the sympathizing strangers.

As evening fell, the Waldien carriage pursued its way toward Munich. On, over a rustic bridge thrown from steep bank to bank of the greenly-flowing Iser, with white shoals and promontories and rafts on which boatmen in gay costumes floated down from the distant mountains. On, through a long avenue of poplars, their lengthening shadows thrown behind by the declining sun, and past embowered villas, until the walls of Munich drew near and nearer, and the road merged into Ludwig Strasse.

They enter this street by the open space where the Triumphal Arch has since arisen. The sun, sinking beneath the extensive plain where stands the city, throws a wondrous atmosphere of romance over the rich Byzantine architecture, deepening the coloring and softening the contrasting shades. Here, where the broad street is broader yet, is the pure, white, calm-looking University, with its long rows of windows arched, and medallions inclosing the head of poet, philosopher, or legislator. Opposite, cool and gray as the deepening twilight, is the Jesuits' College; while farther on, the slender white towers and glit-



tering crosses of the Ludwig Kirche are blending indistinctly in the dusk with the few snowy clouds above.

Silence is undisturbed save by the low plash of the fountain before the University; and as the stars come forth slowly one by one, the carriage draws up before the ivy-wreathed gray portico of the Waldiena.

## XXI.

"THE short and simple annals of the poor."

"WARR here for me."

This order given, the lady alighted from her droschke, at a street-corner in the neighborhood of the Sendling Gate. She walked slowly and thoughtfully along, now and then raising her eyes from the pavement to observe the houses as she passed. One at length riveted her attention. This was a modest bakery, standing close by the ruinous old gate, in all the glories of salmon brick, white stucco, and shining shop-window. Something else was there, however, to draw that attentive gaze. An old woman wearing the silver Munich cap, scarlet petticoat, and white kerchief folded on her bosom, filled with her ample proportions the open doorway, looking up the street, shading her face with her withered hand. The lady advanced.

"Have you fresh Brezeln?" she asked, her manner strangely embarrassed for so commonplace a question.

The woman glanced at her, surprised; then with a courtesy led the way into the shop.

While she was making up the required parcel, her customer surveyed eagerly the surroundings. The shelves with their fragrant heaps of loaves, the well-filled glass case upon the counter, and the street-win-

dow stocked with endless variety of cakes, all testified to neatness and abundance.

"Will the gnädiges Fräulein direct me where to send? My granddaughter will be back presently; she stepped out just a moment ago," the old woman said, while she bent over the money-drawer, seeking change for the gold piece given her.

"I will wait for her return," was the hurried reply, "and she can go with me."

"Let me then give you a seat by the fire. It is rather chilly here this damp morning." And the hostess bustled about and placed a chair near the porcelain stove behind the screen dividing the shop.

"Yours is the prettiest bakery and the neatest I have yet seen in Munich," the stranger said, after a moment, while her eyes restlessly followed its owner, busied in arranging a tray of freshly-baked cakes.

She glanced complacently around.

"It is a nice place," she replied. "And all the brighter because a few years ago I never thought such would belong to me."

"And how did it come at length?" inquired the other.

"A few years ago, gracious Fräulein, in place of this shop was a dingy house, old and dismal and crumbling as the Sendlinger Thor itself, where, by dint of keeping two or three lodgers and baking a few loaves when I could get the meal, I managed to eke out a meagre living."

"And whence then this great change?" her interlocutress asked again, almost impatiently.

"By one of these very lodgers, my young lady. He came with scarce a kreuzer in his pocket, and a sick

and wounded servant on his hands. He went first to my neighbor Dame Hanne, who, bless you, called the Herr a Jaherr for the coming, and would have naught more to say to him. She told me, indeed, when the poor servant was lying almost at the point of death beneath my roof, that I ought to send them both about their business, for they evidently had no friends in Munich, and heaven only knew where the first rent-money was to come from. And she did not like those ugly wounds; mightn't they be wicked men, burglars or the like? For was there not only last week a great robbery on the Dult Platz? But I could not turn a dying man out of doors, and besides, the young gentleman his master was so handsome and pleasant-spoken that he quite won my old heart. And to see him for all those years working for himself and his servant, too, who had lost the use of his right arm, and could not, therefore, earn half a living, that was truly beautiful! And he was so kind to my poor son."

"How was that?"

There were tears in the voice that questioned, as well as in that which replied:

"My son was not bad, mein Fräulein, but he was my youngest, my Schooskind, and—well, perhaps, as the neighbors said, I did indulge him beyond what was right. Yes, it was certainly my fault. But he was not bad, only easily led astray, and so it was I left my elder son in the dear old home where he and I were born, afar in the mountains, and followed my Karl to Munich when he took a fancy to come, thinking he could gain more at his trade of wood-carving than in our village. But work was hard to find, and money harder, and often would my poor son have

given up in despair and gone to drinking, if it had not been for the young gentleman's kind help and encouragement. All the time, himself was working night and day, always giving away the half of what he made. My son lies yonder in God's Acre, and that he lived happily and died peacefully, I am grateful to the Herr Ba——"

"What—what name did you say?" the lady interrupted falteringly.

"The Herr —— But I forgot. Strange, that I never can remember. A count he is now. He fell heir to a great fortune, and I promise you he forgot no one. This house he built for me then in the room of the old one, and furnished and stocked the shop."

"And have you seen him since he went away?"

"Did I say he went away? He did, though; but he is in Munich now, and came to see me directly he arrived. He wants me to go back to my native village, and leave the shop to Gretchen, who is a Braut, and will be married very soon."

"To the mountaineer?"

The woman looked at the stranger, all amaze.

"How did you know?" she exclaimed.

"Were you not together last week at the festival? I recognize your face, I think."

"Ach, then, mein Fräulein, you have seen us all. Anton is from the same village, and a good carver, like my poor Karl. But he gets much better paid, and so he is come to Munich, and Gretchen will be Bäckerin and keep the shop as soon as she is married. And I am to go back to the old cottage. Not as I came, however; for the Herr Count will not hear of my going without a great deal of money, that my old

age may not be burdensome to even my kind, good son. The Herr Count calls this paying his debts; but I am sure any little kindness I was able to show him he repaid tenfold while he was yet poor."

Some one came into the shop just then, and the talkative bakeress took her place behind the counter.

The customer went out, and the door almost immediately opened again. This time it was a man's step, and a man's voice gave cordial greeting to "Mütterchen Liese."

The lady could see nothing, ensconced behind the screen. But at sound of that voice she started, and leaned forward in a listening attitude.

"Why, dame," it was saying cheerily, "you look younger and younger every day. You are growing a great deal younger than I."

"That is because you won't marry, Herr Count," she replied decidedly. "Have you not yet found a nice pretty mädchen for a bride?"

His answer came with some hesitation.

"Nice pretty little maidens are not difficult to find, but, unfortunately, they won't find me nice and pretty, too. Even Gretchen, who, when she was a wee coquette, used to call herself my Braut, has given me up for a crusty bachelor, living, loving, suffering alone—the loved one beyond reach forever," he said in mournfulness, as if to himself. "By the way, where is the child?" he added, shaking himself free from thought.

"Gone to the Schranken Platz, dear Count. She ought to be back ere this."

"And does she like our arrangement about the shop?"

"She is as happy as a bird, and already takes all the baking business into her own hands."

"Now, Frau Liese, I want to know when you will be ready to return to your old home? I may be going at almost any day upon a far journey, and would wish to know you happily and comfortably settled."

"And where is the Herr Count going, if I might ask?"

"Certainly you might, if I could tell you. Perhaps to the far off countries of the East; perhaps away over the seas to America. But whithersoever I go, it is not probable that I shall return. Therefore I would first know you happy in your home, where you, the only one in all the world except my poor old servant, will sometimes think of, sometimes pray for me."

Few words or many more might have been exchanged. The lady there heard nothing, leaning back motionless in her chair, her face white and fixed as death.

Frau Liese's gently-trickling tears stood still at sight of that face, when she returned with Gretchen. But the lady rose composedly, thanked the good dame for the water which she brought, and, followed by the girl, passed swiftly and silently through the quiet street, to the square where her droschke yet awaited.

## XXII.

"COMPLAINT is for the feeble, and despair  
For evil hearts. Mine still can hope, still bear—  
Still hope for others, what it never knew  
Of truth and peace, and silently pursue  
A path beset with briars, and wet with tears like dew."

"AH! this is really the Munich of my day-dreams," exclaimed Margaret, as she and the Baron followed into the Schramm Platz the two carriages containing the Baroness, Mlle. Von Amsel, Mr. More, and Counts Zalkiewski and Falkenstein, all bound for a day in the gardens of the royal summer palace of Nymphenburg.

"How picturesquely contrasted," she said, "are those heavy-arched arcades and the small shops beneath, these stately handsome buildings in their wealth of carving and stucco, and those distant primitive wooden booths. Are not yonder the towers of the Munich Cathedral?"

"They are. I see you are disappointed, and think them rather ugly and uncouth in this strong noontide light. But when we pass them on our return, when sunset is glowing upon their massive proportions and dome-like summits, changing the dusky red brick into an enchanted edifice of purple and gray, clothed upon by the mists of evening, you will agree with me that



no style of building could be more imposing or harmonize so well with the strange old streets surrounding. That fountain," pointing with the whip, as he spoke, toward the end of the street, "is the scene of the Metzger Sprung. You have heard of that, perhaps?"

"No, never. Do tell me about it."

"An ancient ceremony, dating back to the sixteenth century, when Munich was ravaged by the plague. While the panic-stricken city lay hushed as the grave, in from the green fields came a procession of coopers, with garlands and gay music, and danced through the deserted streets, calling upon the inhabitants to join them. The city, awakened from the dead, was soon one scene of mad revel; and excitement, banishing despondency, banished also disease. I know not whether the medical faculty would prescribe the remedy, but the cure is well attested by tradition. In remembrance of it, the dance, the Schäffler Tanz, is reenacted every seven years. The Metzger Sprung originated at the same period, and from the same cause. The plague having thus suddenly abandoned its possessions, a band of butchers assembled here in the market-place, and, after various preliminary ceremonies, leaped into the fountain, by way of proving to the populace that the waters were no longer tainted. This 'Butchers' Leap' is repeated yearly. Imagine these silent streets echoing jests and shouts of laughter, as seven merry mermen, quondam butchers, endowed with many calves' tails in lieu of the one dolphin's, flounder in the fountain, unweariedly deluging the eager crowds."

"And when does this take place? Shall I see it?"

Margaret asked, as fountain and Schrannen Platz together disappeared round a corner.

"In holy week; and of course you will see it. You will not think of leaving us this winter?"

Margaret sighed. She dared not anticipate a single day, and those intervening months were a blank which thought could not fill up.

Almost silently they drove on until the outskirts of the city were gained.

"Look," cried Margaret, rousing herself from her abstraction; "can that be Aimée's carriage standing before that factory? There is no one in it."

"Yon factory is the great bronze foundry, where the fire broke out last night. Our party must have followed the crowd in. Would you like to go, too? We can see nothing of the Bavaria, of course, but may hear something."

The stream of people flowed in across the inclosure to the larger of the two buildings it contained, where was the casting-room of the Bavaria.

Margaret looked around with interest upon the furnace growing dark after the intense heat of the night before, upon the great iron-covered pit for the casting of the gigantic Bavaria's bust, and up to the blackened rafters of the lofty roof above, where tiny sparkles of dying-out fire glowed against the darkness.

The Baron entered into conversation with one of the workmen, and Margaret listened as the man told how, for five days and four nights, there had been incessant fear and watching lest fire should break out; and how on the last evening, spite of all their care, it had done so. And he described how they had labored on till midnight, continually stirring the molten metal,

to prevent adhesion to the furnace walls, while fire smouldered above in the rafters, kept down only by wet cloths, for the use of water, with that burning mass beneath, would have caused the instant destruction of the building and the lives within. At midnight, however, the great work was accomplished, the bust of the Bavaria cast, and all turned to the extinguishing of the fire. For his part, the man added, his life long would he remember that eleventh of October.

When Margaret and the Baron issued from the foundry precincts, the other carriage was no longer in view.

Through villages and past queer old farmhouses they continued, entering at last an avenue, where, through the long vista of interlacing boughs, brilliant in autumnal coloring, uprose the white, semi-circular palace of Nymphenburg.

After the tour of inspection through this, and hearing at last of the fugitives, Margaret and her companion proceeded to the gardens.

"Do not let us play any longer at this game of hide and seek," Margaret said at length, as, after sauntering on, admiring the many charms of nature and art so gracefully combined in these regal gardens, she sank, weary, upon a rustic bench.

But the neighboring sound of voices, and the unmistakable, clear, joyous ring of Aimée's laughter came at that moment—a summons which was followed.

It was a lovely spot, that which they had chosen—a bright tiny glen where terraces swept downward to a fountain gleaming greenly in its white basin, beneath the shadows of fir and laurel, sequestering it above and around from the outer world.

"O Countess Zalkiewski!" cried Mlle. Von Amsel, as, after mutual explanations, Margaret came to her side; "you do not know how profitably I have employed the hour of waiting for you. M. More has been giving me Irish lessons."

"Of what description, Mr. More? Most Irish lessons, of which I have heard, consisted of instructions in the use of the shillalah. Surely you have not been teaching Mlle. Von Amsel that."

"Mlle. Von Amsel is skilled in weapons far more dangerous. But she has actually progressed as far as Erin go bragh."

"Now, M. More," cried Käthe, playfully indignant, "you do not give me credit for one half my learning. Can I not say my own name, Fräulein Käthe, Kathleen Mavourneen, and—and——"

She stopped short in vexation. Margaret had glanced at Mr. More, the corners of her mouth twitching the while. And as she met his deprecating glance, and observed the color mount to his brow, while around his mouth also was a suspicious movement, she broke into peals of merry laughter.

Mlle. Von Amsel looked inquiringly from the one to the other.

"I pray you, pardon the Countess," Mr. More very gravely apologized. "She laughs most unmercifully at every thing Irish, and even her friends can not escape. Is it not so, Countess?"

"I trust Mlle. Von Amsel will not think of my seeming rudeness," Margaret said, recovering composure. "I have so often laughed with and at Mr. More, that——"

Aimée cut short her apology.

"Eh, Marguerite, cela ne presse point—let me rather tell you of such a pretty puzzle we tried at the Chamisso's the other night, when you were too lazy or too provoking to go, and Max here remained to encourage you in your perversity, and we lost M. le Comte upon the way, so that Louis and I were the only initiated, and the poor dear Baron has forgotten it beyond the shadow of a doubt. Your discussion on names reminded me of it. What is in a name? I think they called it. Come, shall we not have it? For we are all growing undeniably stupid. Louis, do you remember?"

"I remember being greatly puzzled, but the puzzle I have forgotten. You must not call on me for assistance."

"Etourdi! Assistance is precisely what I do not want. But I do want your pencil and a leaf from your note-book. I know you generally carry one."

"Unfortunately to-day is an exception," he returned, giving her the pencil alone, after an unsuccessful search for the note-book.

"You, Max?" she asked.

"Not I. Memoranda are nothing to me. All I strive for is forgetfulness."

It was uttered carelessly, but there followed a glance toward Margaret who sat beside the fountain, Ernst standing near.

Ernst started when Aimée applied to him, and she had to enter into explanation as if she had not spoken before. Then he drew forth a letter unaddressed—unfolded, and tearing off the blank side, gave it to her. The other page, which was closely written, he replaced, but had hardly done so when he took it out

again. He paused, while a heavy shade of thought darkened his brow. And then he tore it into fragments and set his heel upon them, crushing them down into the mossy turf. It needed not his fierce hard breathing as he did so, to flush Margaret's cheek with a passion she did not understand. For the wind had seized one of these fragments, a slip longer than the others, and whirled it away, and laid it there before her feet. Unsuspectingly her eyes had dropped upon it. Could she mistake—or was there, in that free German hand she knew so well, an *Ai*—written at the end of the line, where the rest was torn abruptly off?

She sat there unable to withdraw her gaze, dizzy and faint, and trembling, until Ernst's slight movement at some words from Aimée roused her.

"Now," she had said, while her audience gathered interested around, "I must have all your names. Eh, *va-t-en*, Max, of course I know. But yours, M. More?"

"Rory O'Flanagan O'Doherty O'Halloran Ballywalter Donaghadee Carrickfergus astore," quizzed he, somewhat ashamed of his patronymic Dermot.

"*O le pauvre enfant!*" exclaimed Aimée, uplifting brows and hands. "Mais, monsieur, as there are so many O's, may it not be en regle that an exclamation point may stand for all?"

"But one objection, madame; '*alas*' has the self-same point. But I'll waive that pointed argument."

"And your name, Count Zalkiewski—what do you call him, Marguerite?"

"My name is Ernst Ivar," he interposed quickly.

"Ernst! Ah bah! pardon, monsieur, but that is really too stern for ears polite. Ivar is musical—I

shall write you down Ivar. Now the Baron's name is Ludwig, but German gutturals, I do assure you, serve me only for scolding purposes, and when I am in good humor he is Louis. I hope, *mignonne*," to Margaret, "you will never call your husband by that harsh first name."

"Never," replied Margaret, in a tone so sharp and constrained that it startled herself. "That name to me is associated only with—one long since dead. And that name is silent on my lips while the dead is dead."

She repented of her speech the instant it was uttered, for Falkenstein looked up in quick inquiry from her to Ernst. He was unmoved. She could read no emotion in the immobility of the firm-set mouth, and the calm gaze not averted from her, but passing her by and resting on the ripple of the fountain.

"My pencil—I have dropped it," Aimée said, returning to her occupation at Käthe's impatient suggestion.

There was some disturbance consequent upon its disappearance, and a general search began. A vain search, until the Baroness suggested to Margaret that it might have rolled her way. Margaret rose. Yes, there it was, safe beneath a fold of her dress. She stooped for it, and there, side by side, her hand came in contact with that fragment of paper, swept nearer by her movements. Quick as thought—yet not before thought came, self-scorn and horror for her deed—she snatched it up with the pencil, clenched her little hand upon it until the nails drew blood from the tender palm, and waited with a shudder of impatience, a whirl of deadly fear, until the moment when she might read

unobserved. Conscience whispered to cast away the temptation, to trample it under foot, even as he had done, to dishonor not herself thus willfully. But the clamor in her heart rose against and drowned the voice of conscience.

They were all round Aimée now—even Ernst, to whom she had beckoned. She had summoned Margaret too, but she, pleading her throbbing headache, remained where she was, alone.

Stifling the upbraidings of her conscience, she rested her elbow on the edge of the fountain, shading her eyes with one hand, while with the other she softly straightened out the paper, and read:

“By the ties time has broken, and you forgotten,  
Ai——”

It was all. And it was the death-wound in her heart. Not that she feared him. She had seen in his eyes, when he destroyed the paper, the utter destruction of all that it contained. Not that for one moment she distrusted Aimée. She knew that the past, whatsoever of joy or woe it had brought and taken away, crossed not the threshold of her heart again. She knew not why her pulses all stood still while her brain was reeling. She thought that it was hate—if she thought at all. She sat on, motionless, her face ashen in its darkness, her bright smiles all burnt out; until his step drew near, his voice said something, and the blood flew up to her very brow.

All were setting forth for a tour around the gardens. All but Margaret, who, still urging headache, and setting aside rather peremptorily all offers to remain with her, promised not to move until their return.



But the Baron took possession of the unoccupied seat on her bench.

"Will you let me stay with you?" he asked, when she turned with the friendly smile she always had for him. "Ramble and ride in this October sun already suffice for a stout elder like myself. You are wise—our friends must find their way back to us. While you remain stationary like the lode-star, Zalkiewski may enact compass for them."

Her only reply was an unconscious curl of the lip.

The Baron observed her intently before he said :

"Countess, are we friends—true friends?"

"It is great gladness to me to believe it," was the earnest response.

"Will you then accord me a friend's privilege of candor?"

She questioned him with a long, wondering gaze, that fell suddenly, answered, as he went on :

"It grieves me to see you unhappy, and I fear me, my poor child, you are preparing for yourself an unhappy future. You have a noble husband, one who is admired and esteemed by all who know him, and whose love is such that not all are worthy to feel or to receive. Will you chill its warmth—will you lower its loftiness by schooling yourself to a lower standard than that which he now sees in you? Love is long-suffering—in natures like Zalkiewski's, eternal. But if trampled upon, crushed into the dust, it must contract some earth-stain."

She did not speak, but bowed her face down upon the cold marble of the fountain, and hid it there.

"It is hard to grieve thee thus, thou poor one ;

but I have seen the blight gain ground day by day, and no true friend could remain silent."

Still she replied not, only shivered and shrank back.

He spoke again, most tenderly.

"Let me warn you against endeavoring to arouse your husband's jealousy. You may never measure the anguish in your power to inflict. There are those who would die rather than lay bare to careless or triumphant eyes their wounded hearts. If aught stand between two who are bound by duty and affection, what matter by which the obstacle be removed? If by the one innocent of wrong, is pride more powerful than love? If by the erring one, can not every noble heart forgive and forget too?"

"Never, never—he has no right—he who—" Margaret cried, starting up flushed and trembling with passion—trembling yet more, and speech dying on her lips, as she saw her husband close beside her.

She attempted to pass him in the narrow pathway, and he drew back while he said gently:

"Unavoidably I have overheard your last words. You will pardon me that, Margaret."

She inclined her head for answer, and he stood until the last flutter of her dress was lost amid the shrubbery. Then he strode up to the Baron, and laying a heavy hand upon his shoulder, spoke sternly and haughtily:

"Hear me, sir. I permit no mediation between my wife and myself. What explanation can you give of this unwarrantable liberty?"

The Baron reddened with anger at first, but presently he replied good-humoredly:

"You must not condemn unheard an over-zealous friend. You must pardon me in that I can not avoid observing all is not right with Margarethe. I have seen her pale and dispirited at times, and at times recklessly gay, as if resolved to brave some heavy trouble. I imagined, from her gentle friendliness to me, that I possessed some influence with her, and, seeing where lay the evil, endeavored, it may be mistakenly, to remove it."

Ernst made no reply, but paced up and down the graveled path.

"You say she is pale," he said at length abruptly. "Do you think her ill?"

"Ill in mind, not in body."

"Advise me what to do."

"I can only say to you that which I have already said to her. If you have wronged her, ask her forgiveness—if she has wronged you, forgive her unasked."

"She said well—I have no right to speak of forgiveness," broke from Ernst as he turned away with a heavy sigh.

"Zalkiewski, my dear fellow," said the Baron, following after and detaining him; "don't despair thus. It is impossible that she does not love you, and, loving you, she must sooner or later forgive."

Ernst forced himself into perfect calmness.

"I owe it to her," he said, "that her hold upon any remaining friend should not be weakened by me; therefore I will tell you all. It is the only expiation in my power."

"I know not whether you have heard our marriage was what is called a runaway match, which generally

presupposes blind love upon the woman's side, clear-sighted villainy taking advantage of that blindness on the man's, especially if he happen to be much the elder. In this case it was slightly different, the difference being clear-sighted love and blind villainy. Ay, you are right to draw back from me. I care not. Who feels the sting of shame, when tortured by remorse?"

"You misunderstand me," Waldien hastened to interpose; "it was but astonishment I felt. Here is some strange mistake. I will answer for your honor with my life."

"Then is your life little worth," was the cold reply. "What think you of the honor which would permit a man meeting a powerless girl upon a lonely mountain, to force her with threats—and threats which at that moment from his soul he meant—to break a promise to the living, a solemn oath to the dead, in giving her word to marry him immediately? What think you of the generosity of soul which could resist the prayers, the tears, the agony of the helpless, and inexorably force the marriage before God's high altar, estranging her from all she loved?"

"From all?"

"I have said from all. She loved one whom she deemed honorable. When she knew him honorable no longer she loved him no longer. She foresaw—she warned."

Waldien grasped his hand.

"You are an inexorable judge," he said. "I still answer for your honor. If by one fall we sank forever, who of us would stand?"

Ernst silently returned the earnest pressure.

"And Margarethe?" the Baron asked after a pause.

"I have taken from her all that renders life endurable. The past I have made unreal as a dream—the present a weariness—the future a void."

"If she loved you—" the Baron suggested.

"I know what you would say," interrupted Ernst, "but you mistake her. Were she less strong in character and heart, she might, as you thought, love me the more that I dared commit a crime for her sake. But Margaret is too pure, too proud, to love where she can not trust. I do not hope. I have not, since that day, hoped for that. To see her at peace and content, is all my aim now."

"And will her family not forgive her?"

"Margaret has written but once, and that once merely announcing her marriage, without explanation. She forbade my writing; nevertheless, I have constantly done so. Contrary to her generous intention, I have explained all. But notwithstanding that my pride was laid thus low, there has been no answer. Lately I have learned, fortuitously, that her mother is at Naples, and my last letter was directed thither. It is just possible my former ones may have miscarried. Her mother may relent in time. Until then there is no escape from the misery I have wrought. Then—" he ended in a husky voice.

"Then all will be happy again," the Baron concluded, with attempted cheerfulness.

Ernst quietly shook his head.

"All will be right and just," he said, "not happy. Margaret will, I trust, be calm and content when I am no longer near to recall a season she would fain forget."

"And you?"

"I—if Poland demand not my services—if by that time there be no awakening to liberty—I shall probably offer them to some foreign power, to some just cause, where I may die at least honorably. I have no plans. My future is little to me, and nothing to any other."

"There is yet hope, Zalkiewski."

"Is there? I can not see it. But you are right. For her I hope, in her content I will not despair. And now I have to request you to seek her, and to join my—to join the Baroness with her. Pursue this path to the right, and you will find the party. I follow you."

"Have I your permission to tell your wife that you explained all to me? She must see how noble——"

"It was not for this I told you," Enst interrupted proudly. "You may say, if she refer to the subject, which is far from probable, that I have satisfied you of her blamelessness. Nothing more."

### XXIII.

"WHAT hath been, is; what is, will be. I know,  
Even while the heart drops blood, it must be so.  
I live and smile, for oh! the griefs that kill  
Kill slowly; and I bear within me still  
My conscious self and my unconquered will."

THE crimson curtains were drawn, and the drawing-room brilliant with light, exquisite frescoes, and a gay though small assembly.

Mlle. Von Amsel, assisted by the hostess, Baroness Waldien, was seated at a card-table, initiating into the mysteries of German cards, Mr. More, whose confusion among acorns, bells, trifles, and armed champions, created not a little amusement.

The Countess Zalkiewski, seated apart, listlessly turned over the leaves of some music which Count Falkenstein had brought, listening and now and then replying to him with scarce concealed *nonchalance*. In his eyes she had never seemed so beautiful, lounging in her arm-chair, her black dress contrasting with its crimson cushions, and with her marble-pale face and warm brown hair that, parted simply upon the low, broad brow, waved above the blue-veined temples, and was gathered in a massive loop behind.

Presently from the card-table, where merriment had

given place to low-toned, eager consultation, Aimée spoke:

"Marguerite, and you, cher Max, hear only what a charming scheme we have formed, or rather are forming. Come, join our circle and give us your assistance."

Margaret slowly rose, and passed behind her chair, leaning upon the back. The Count, with a slight frown of annoyance, followed.

"What is in the wind now?" Margaret asked.

"Private theatricals. Only think of it! Is it not an idea à ravir? You know, Marguerite, we can have the ball-room fitted up with a stage, and the reception and drawing-rooms will do for dancing, for Käthe and I are determined not to dispense with that. Of the conservatory we can make quite an enchanted palace, and Herr Wolfmeister will arrange the scenery. My 'dear five hundred friends,' as you call them, will be willing spectators, and the only point now to be decided is the choice of a play."

"Quite an important point, is it not? It must be neither too long nor too short, too complicated nor too simple, too sentimental nor too matter-of-fact. In short, not too any thing."

"Perhaps," said Count Falkenstein, "I have that which might at least answer to Countess Zalkiewski's catalogue of negative excellences. It is a drama written by an old college friend of mine, a story upon which his after-fate was a mournful commentary, and which armed the hand that sacrificed his happiness."

"How was that?" Margaret asked, interested.

"The lady of his heart was placed in a position similar to that of the lady of his drama. She had read



this, admired and followed the heroine, leaving the lover to his own devices. I assure you, the story is not wanting in plot."

"And what became of the lover, the real one?"

"Ah, Madame la Comtesse, why in the name of all that is romantic do you ask that? Of course I ought to reply, died of a broken heart. But alas! truth compels me to state that wandering in search of forgetfulness, he found it, returned and married a wealthy bourgeoisie, and is now the owner of an extensive Augsburg brewery."

"The Countess finds that beer sour indeed," laughed Mr. More. "Well, Falkenstein, will the play be forthcoming?"

"On one condition," Falkenstein replied. "If the Countess Zalkiewski will do me the favor and my friend the honor of enacting the principal rôle."

"Do not make that your condition," Margaret returned, "for I most decidedly decline any part save that of spectator."

All joined in the outcry against this; but Margaret persisted until she met Ernst's eyes fixed anxiously upon her. He had been standing apart with moody brow, watching Aimée. But he started as he caught the thread of the neighboring discussion.

Margaret's color deepened, and she returned his glance defiantly.

"I revoke my refusal, and will take any part you may choose to give me," she said in a tone audible, as intended, to her husband.

He saw her a moment after turn away and gather up the music she had been looking over. He crossed the room and was at her side while yet Count Fal-

kenstein, impatiently polite, was detained to answer Mlle. Von Amsel's eager questionings about the drama—were the characters in the beau monde?—in past or present days?—for it is so important because of the costume.

"Are you going to the music-room?" Ernst asked of Margaret.

She assented, and they moved on together, entering the spacious alcove rather than apartment, appearing to the drawing-room a perfect bower where ivy, beloved of the German, festooned the arched entrance and drooped vailing the piano.

Ernst arranged Margaret's music and turned the leaves while she played one of Mozart's sorrowful sonatas. Then as she ended, and her fingers strayed lightly over the notes of a simple prelude, he spoke, fixing his eyes upon her downcast face.

"You must be aware of my reason for thus intruding upon you. It is earnestly to request that you do not act in these theatricals."

Her eyes were still bent upon the keys while she answered coldly :

"I have promised."

"You surely can withdraw. It is not yet too late." Then after a pause, during which she continued to play without looking at him, he resumed: "If you will not, unconvinced of its needfulness, grant me this, you must allow me to give my reason. Doubtless you will be obliged to act with Count Falkenstein, who will construe your compliance as a mark of personal favor. This you would not willingly give to a man who still cherishes the old feeling, stronger than friendship, for you."

"He never felt it," was the quick reply.

"Can you not see that he both did and does? Margaret, I warn you."

She raised her head now, her cheek flushing and her eyes flashing.

"Sir, I have need of no warning," she said haughtily. "No need of warning from *you*. I will not withdraw my promise upon grounds that are to me insufficient and insulting."

And down came her fingers vehemently upon the fourth false chord.

"Qu' as-tu, ma mie? Or is the piano bewitched? Give us a song, if you are weary of playing," cried Aimée from the drawing-room.

Margaret immediately began Mignon's Kennst du das Land, and as the last notes died away, she rose from the piano, and before Ernst could have detained her, even if he had so wished, returned to the drawing-room where all now surrounded the Baroness.

"Vive la Princesse Gunhilde," thus Mr. More hailed Margaret's approach.

"Is that my rank?" she rejoined with a forced smile, "and who are the managers? Who compose the troupe?"

"Mr. More and the Frau Gräfin Starnberg are managers. Madame Von Chamisso, Mlle. de Rubigny, Mlle. Von Amsel, and yourself, most sovereign Princess, with Max for hero and king and M. de Rubigny for traitor and villain—pardon, Monsieur—are pledged to our troupe. The few silent subordinate characters are easily found. You should have been here when Max gave a sketch of the plot. It is charming. Re-

peat it? Mais je ne suis pas en train. When shall we have the play, Herr Count?"

"To-morrow, without fail."

"Then to-morrow evening all the *dramatis personæ* meet here," added Aimée.

While Mr. More rehearsed in stage aside:

"All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players."

"Here comes the lady. Oh! so light a foot  
Will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint."

"The lover,  
Sighing like furnace—"

"And one may smile and smile, and be a villain."

"Then shall our names,  
Familiar in their mouths as household words,  
*Harald the King, Eric, and Viking brave,*  
*Gunhilde the Princess, Dowager, and maidens,*  
Be in their flowing cups freshly remembered."

## XXIV.

"Lo, where the stage  
Holds its warped mirror."

"HUSH! the curtain is rising!"

Silence falls, as, revealing the stage to the three or four hundred eyes appertaining to the Baroness Waldien's friends, the curtain rose upon a palace-hall of the middle ages. Its gray stone walls are hung in storied tapestry where gallant knights and fair dames reduplicate the court assembled. There, upon the dais, behind which stalwart armored spearsmen range, is throned the crowned and sceptred Harald of Denmark. And now through a rude arched entrance is winding a procession. Foremost, an ancient cowed monk, leading by the hand a maiden of royal rank, as would seem from her tiara of pearls, and no less from her stately bearing, although her eyes are lowered modestly. Her flowing hair is braided with pearls, and the ermine tunic over her gold-broidered robe is fastened upon either shoulder by clusters of those gems, leaving the round white arms quite bare.

In this first scene yon reverend monk intrusts the Princess Gunhilda to the gentle protection of King Harald, until such time as her betrothed shall have

returned from distant wars and she be elaimed by him and her own Norway.

From this time the tale speeds on until protector and protected, oblivious both of the absent warrior, fall madly in love. Then is the awaking.

In the grand old castle park, Harald, in hunting-dress, is walking with Gunhilda. The love long burning in his eyes is there spoken passionately. One moment she listens, the next, with a stifled moan, starts hurriedly away. But he grasps her hand, and cries :

We may not part !"

Steadfast her reply :

Ay, though our severed hearts bleed e'en to death.  
This may we not—we may not break our faith—  
May not, in life's stern warfare, recreant turn,  
And, trembling, flee the battle. If our hearts  
Faint with despair, stand still, we'll tear them out.  
Cast them on, on, beyond the fearful field  
Where corpses stiffen and the wounded shriek,  
And Sorrow grapples with us, to the foot  
Of that White Throne where God of hosts awaits  
To crown all victors with the crown of life.  
There only may our hearts meet innocent,  
Till the great trumpet end the fearful fray,  
And we clasp hands upon the conquered field,  
Never, O Harald ! never more to part.

Ernst in his watching sees no longer Norwegian princess, but Margaret Ross—no longer towers of the palace castle or distant ocean view, but a lonely mountain, towering cliffs, a silver-gleaming lake. And he knows that in Gunhilda's words speaks Margaret as she spoke in vain that morning neither may forget. And he fancies, or is it fancy? that in the last line,

when her voice falters at the name of Harald, it is that another name trembled on her lips.

Perhaps another too may deem the thrilling tones, the changing color, the earnestness of look and gesture, not all bestowed upon far-away sorrows of the traditionary Gunhilda. Perhaps he may think the hand, slowly withdrawn from his own, not Gunhilda's waving aside in agony the love of Harald, but Margaret's that of Falkenstein.

Gunhilda alone is there in the succeeding scenes, noble in her mute fortitude, brave in her firm avoidance of the irresolute Harald. Came at last the longed-for and yet dreaded tidings—the warrior-betrothed is returning, will on the morrow claim his bride. There is a wild scene between that bride and the king. He entreats, reasons, and finally threatens. Whereupon she is no more the sorrow-stricken suppliant, but the brave, high-hearted woman, scorn in her flashing eyes and on her brow as she turns and leaves him silently. Ernst has seen all this before.

She resolves to escape, and that night she and her faithful bowerwoman, having eluded the vigilance of the sentinel, glide forth in disguise from the castle gates and hurriedly pursue their way. Suddenly they are surrounded by a masked and muffled guard. The attendant clings to and refuses to leave her mistress, until a blow fells her senseless to the earth. The princess is borne off, a gauntleted hand upon her mouth stifling her cries.

The next scene is a lonely moor. Moonlight dimly defines a pathway between treacherous morasses, and glimmers cold and faint upon the turgid flood almost overhanging, yet barred back by a sluice from a pit

down which the trunk of a gnarled and knotted tree has still retained its place. There the captive is released. She stands in her white robes among those dark men, her figure drawn up, her arms crossed upon her bosom—pale, but regarding them in steadfast calm. There is a pause. Then forth from the group strides one wrapt in a large mantle, having his face concealed, and demands if the princess *now* consents to obey the will of the king? She simply answers, Never. He warns her she is utterly in his power, can hope for no rescue, and for no mercy if she still refuse; and repeats his question. Now less than before—is her reply. A mute sign to the muffled band and they seize the proud maiden, hurry her forward, and bind her, unresisting, to the broken tree in the dismal hollow. Once again the leader repeats his question. She turns fearlessly, and her words are spoken with quiet scorn, broken anon by passionate utterances:

I die to-night—

But hear me yet one instant ere I die.  
Harald, I know thee. Nay, why turn away?  
Fear'st thou I'll sue to thee? Nay, not one breath.  
Dreadest thou to meet 'Gunhilda's empress eyes,'  
Those 'violets in the shade,' 'twin-stars of love'?  
They shall not plead one glance from out the past,  
For, king, I know thee—not alone unmasked  
Before my sight—revealed unto my heart.  
I dreamed thee noble—knew thee something stern,  
Determined, reckless in thy purposes:  
Thought I, the stronger in defense of right,  
The nobler champion in the cause of truth,  
The firmer lover, faithful beyond time.  
Thus went my dream. To-night I am awake,  
And by the light of near eternity  
I see—oh! would to heaven I were blind!



She paused, bowing her head upon her fettered hands. Then lifting it proudly, said :

“Awaitest thou mine answer ? Do thy worst—  
Death is not deadlier now than life to me.”

And the gates of the sluice stand open, and the stagnant tide is slowly, surely overflowing into the dismal hollow. The murderous band without glance or word retraces the winding way, and the curtain falls, concealing the pale upraised face and clasped hands of the martyr upon Honor's altar.

While the guests, now released from auditorial silence, are discussing the merits of play and players, and the artistic management of stage illusions, the hero and heroine, behind the scenes, are enacting *en caractère* an after-piece—scarcely a farce, however, or intended for the public diversion.

Margaret sat alone in an alcove of the conservatory. A luxuriant white jasmine formed a bower there, and a fountain played before, the plashing of the waters softly accompanying strains of music from the adjacent ball-rooms.

Her elbow rested on the marble basin and her chin within her palm, while she followed dreamily the falling spray. The white death-robes of the princess had, contrary to the generally accepted style of resurrection-robes, been replaced by one of black velvet, high in the throat. The sole trace of the ill-fated Norwegian was that the flowing sleeves were, like hers, open to the shoulder, and confined there by the same pearls she had worn. And a graceful spray of pearly star-blossoms fastened the red-brown hair, passing from the forehead across the twist behind.

Her face was troubled as she sat there, and more than the old heavy sorrow weighed upon her. She now bitterly reproached herself for the false pride which had pledged her to the trial and the shame of this evening. For although reiterated plaudits assured her of Gunhilda's complete success, yet shame overwhelmed in that she had, albeit shrinkingly, laid bare her inmost heart to one who possessed the key by which to read it only too well. Exultation had no part in her thoughts as the surging sea of heads wavered yet before her mind. One stern, sorrowful face only was present.

"Has my captive then escaped her watery prison?" suddenly asked a voice at her side.

She started.

"May the king live!" was her rejoinder. "The waters have given up their prey."

"A grand success, was it not? That water—I had very nearly redeemed Harald's character when I saw it pouring down so fearfully upon you. Almost as overwhelming as the compliments since pouring down on me," he added, seating himself carelessly on the fountain's brink.

"Undoubtedly a great troupe," she said with forced gayety.

"And you—I think you said you had not acted before—but surely I must have deceived myself."

"Never. I doubt if I could again."

Falkenstein hesitated. He reddened and looked eagerly into Margaret's agitated face. He bit his lip until the blood sprang, striving to keep back the words that came at last abruptly.

"Yours is not acting—it is being. You are Gunhilda."

"It was scarcely acting." It was almost a bitter gasp that forced itself thus from her quivering lips. She averted her head, but not before Falkenstein saw a tear steal from beneath the lowered lashes.

At that sight all self-command abandoned him, and leaning forward he cried hurriedly:

"That tear—is it for yourself alone?"

Annoyed at having been observed, she turned not, nor answered.

"Do you not pity—not sorrow for me?"

"For you?" and she looked up in unfeigned astonishment.

"Ay, for me. May no thought, no tear, be won by the love of my whole soul?"

Her eyes flashed fire, and she half rose. But she dropped, upon her seat again, hiding her face in her hands.

Falkenstein was perfectly confounded. That glance of scorn unutterable—could he so have misinterpreted her evident agitation through the play, and was her love but a vain dream? And yet why that passionate weeping—why did she not send him from her side? Could she ever pardon? He resolved to speak to her.

"Ah! forgive——"

"Yes—yes—I forgive," she gasped between her sobs. "Only go—go! You have insulted, you have humiliated me in the very dust—but I know, I know the fault is mine. I would not see—I would not hear—I was mad, recklessly mad and wicked. Had I loved you, I might perchance dream of excuse. I have none. No, no—" she cried, as in his distress he drew nearer and would have spoken. "Leave me in-

stantly—forget—forgive me. I can never forgive myself. Go—go—” and she rose, stamping her foot imperatively.

Without one word, with but one agonized remorseful glance, he went despairingly forth out into the darkness of the night.

And Margaret? She stood motionless until there came a step behind her. She turned, and with a wild cry threw herself into her husband's arms, clinging to him, imploring to be taken away—anywhere, anywhere—only far away.

Ernst had entered the conservatory by one door as Falkenstein had left it by another, therefore he was at a loss for the cause of Margaret's emotion. He asked no questions, however.

“Poor child!” he thought. “Heaven help her, she can fly to none other refuge now. Therefore, and therefore only, she comes to me. This shall not be. I here vow to rest no more until she is with those she loves. My love shall never again trouble her.”

And his manner, tender as to a child, had in it no more of passion.

When Margaret reëntered the ball-room, upon her husband's arm, it had been arranged between them that the morrow's sun should shine upon their homeward way.

## XXV.

"THEY sin who tell us love can die—  
With life all other passions fly—  
All others are but vanity."

"WEARY, Margaret? See, we are nearly at the end of our journey."

Margaret started when her husband spoke, and raising herself from the carriage cushions where she had been resting silently with closed eyes, watched from the window the lights glimmering from Castle Egeri, beacons through the gathering darkness.

"How bright it is! Quite as if we were expected," she exclaimed, and he saw a fitting smile in the moonlight, a smile mournful as that moonlight.

He heard, and a sudden thought, a hope, a deadly fear, seized him. He said no more, but grew restless and impatient until the carriage stopped and Margaret stood by his side at the foot of the ascent winding up to the castle heights.

She took his proffered arm and slowly and wearily, mounted the stone flight of the brow of the cliff—wearily, not with bodily fatigue, but with that blank hopelessness of the future beneath the weight of which, daily heavier, she sank.

On reaching the cloisters she withdrew her hand

from his arm, shading her eyes from the light which streamed from the uncurtained library windows.

"Are you waiting for your maid?" Ernst asked. "She and Fritz appeared to have an endless task before them in gathering together the contents of the carriage. Their very friendly terms do not expedite matters. Shall I send to hasten her?"

"No," Margaret answered, seating herself upon the low balustrade. "I do not want her, I will merely rest here a moment—the moon is so lovely upon the lake. Do not let me detain you," she added, without looking toward him; but back into another evening not long past, when the lights from the Waldien mansion had gleamed thus across the portico where he was standing, and she greeting from the windows the stars peeping out at her for the last time from Munich clouds, heard him sigh heavily, "O Aimée, my little Aimée!"

He moved away into the shadow, watching her.

"For the last time, it must be so," he thought.

She had removed her bonnet, and as she sat there gazing down upon the waters, her features almost in profile, the hair waving low upon her pale cheek, the mantle of her gray traveling-dress thrown back, her hands lying listless in her lap, in the very attitude of Evangeline, Ernst was reminded of the evening when in the cottage garden at Lowerz he had spoken of the resemblance. "God guard you from the misery of that expression," which was now habitual to her eyes, since they had softened once for all for him on that last evening at Munich. From the garden his thoughts strayed into the cottage parlor, where he

heard again her strong and earnest words, and felt the touch of her hand in his.

Soon was he awakened from his dream. Margaret rose, clasping her hands across her brow.

"I can not, oh! I can not bear it," she moaned, "and the end—weeks, months, years, and it may still be distant!"

Ernst came quickly to her side.

"Thou poor one," he said, "grieve not—fear not. The end is not far off—is even now at hand."

She raised her head and their eyes met. Hers were full of tears.

"The end, the end?" she repeated! "Ah! I remember now. And you too, even you, desert me—you leave me all alone. No mother, no sister, no—" and turning away she burst into tears.

Ernst was mystified. He saw she did not understand his meaning, and was at an entire loss as to hers. But when he attempted to explain, she recovered herself and interrupted.

"Forgive me if I have pained you," she said softly, "I did not know you were near. And now let us see what provident fairy has warned your good Zozia of our return."

She gave him her traveling shawl and led the way to the library. He laid his hand upon the lock.

"One word," he said hurriedly, bending down toward her, "whatsoever befall, will you—will you endeavor not quite to hate, only to forget me?"

She colored and cast down her eyes.

"I see you have not forgotten my childishness just now. You must not think of it. I was so weary."

He opened the door.

One moment she stood dazzled by the blaze of light. The next, she sprang forward with a wild cry.

Ernst quietly closed the door.

For Margaret had no more need of him. She had found her refuge, her mother's bosom.

Margaret sat upon a low chair at her mother's feet. Her head rested upon her mother's lap, and her mother's hand lingeringly stroked and put back the heavy braids of her hair.

Upon a sofa reclined a fair, graceful woman, to meet whose smile Margaret often turned.

Alice moved restlessly about the room, now stooping, half crying for joy, to give Margaret a loving hug, and anon listening at every distant sound for a step that came not. At length she cried impatiently,

"Where on earth is your husband—our brother? Why does he not come to greet us?"

Margaret was silent until her mother laid her hand upon her shoulder, saying,

"Where is he, darling? I have not yet seen him, and Jeanie and he are old friends, you know."

Margaret looked with quick inquiry into the mother's face.

"Go and find him, child," she said.

The wife rose. As she passed Jeanie's sofa, her sister caught her hand in both hers, and drawing her down, whispered:

"Tell him one awaits who has now a stronger claim than that of 'auld acquaintance.'"

Margaret glanced from one to the other in utter bewilderment as she left the room.

She returned alone, saying that one of the servants



had seen his master leave the house. She supposed he would return ere long.

"It is already so much beyond invalid hours," Mrs. Ross said, consulting her watch, "that I must wait no more."

"Dear mamma, have they made you comfortable? How long did you say you have been here?" Margaret asked as she accompanied her mother to the door.

"Since Wednesday, my child. And I have been perfectly comfortable. Your old housekeeper, despite grim looks, is most attentive."

"Coming, Alice?" Margaret held out her hand to her. "And you, Lady Jean?"

"No. I'll stay here until you return, which must be the moment your hostess duties are performed. Mamma needs rest, you know, so leave that sleepy child with her, and do you come down to me."

So in half an hour she came down.

Her sister was standing at the window with a smile upon her lips, which brightened as she advanced and put her arm round Margaret.

"Has our inquisitive Madge lost all her curiosity? Do you not remember what an inquiring mind the child was wont to display when her grown-up sister arrived at home from a visit to Edinburgh or London? And does she not now care to penetrate the mystery of our arrival?"

Margaret's manner changed. The trouble returned.

"Do not let us talk of that, dear Jeanie. Tell me rather of Donald, of your little Maude."

"What more can I tell than I have already told? How we ran away from the good-for-nothing fellow

because he had left Naples to take Maude back to her Paris school (the girl is the loveliest thing you ever saw, except when you look in your mirror, for you are exactly alike) the very day before mamma received the letter."

"What letter?" Margaret asked quickly.

"Aha! I thought curiosity was not dead, but sleeping. What letter? 'thereby hangs a tale' too long to be told standing. Come and sit beside me on the sofa, and you shall know."

Seated there, she drew forth a letter which she put into Margaret's hands. Margaret hesitated.

"Yes, read it," Jeanie said, smiling and nodding.

And Margaret read. Her color changed repeatedly until, reaching the end, she hid her face upon her sister's shoulder, sobbing.

The letter ran thus:

"MUNICH, Oct. 5th.

"By the memory of your daughter's childhood, Madame, throw not this letter aside unread. As you value her very life, hear me.

"In my former letters I have striven to exonerate her, deeming it needless to inculcate myself fully and at length. Now, I state the whole truth.

"I have told you that our marriage was one of absolute force, compelled by the power of the strong over the physically weak. On that morning I met her by chance upon a lonely mountain. More than a month was then gone by since I told her of my love and she had left me without hope. Convinced that her love would never be mine, I did not think to seek her farther, until that morning revealed to me her heart. Honor demanded that a betrayal thus unwitting

should be held as it had never been. But I took advantage of it to urge my suit, and when she firmly set aside my every argument, I endeavored to terrify her into submission. Hardened to her tears, to her entreaties, I used threats before which any woman would quail, and she gave her promise to become my wife, coupled with the warning that she could no longer love me. Had this promise not been given, I know that I should have borne her through the surrounding solitudes to my castle, where, unsuspected of any creature, I might have concealed her.

"And now she droops daily, stricken down by despair.

"If you forgive her not, she dies, and I am her murderer.

"Madame, save your child. Receive her, take her from me, that she may see me no more, and live.

"E. I. ZALKIEWSKI.

"Direct to Egeri."

"Do not weep, love," said Jeanie tenderly, "the dark and dreary time is past. He has so atoned for the wrong done that naught save the outward form of a general reconciliation remains to be accomplished. What says your Countess-ship, shall we effect this with due dramatic ceremonies, or do we all know the love in each other's hearts?"

Margaret's tears ceased to flow, but she did not move as she murmured:

"Mamma—does she forgive both?"

"She knows that the error, nay, even sin, of a passionate moment, is but air in the balance when weighed against the steady resolve of self-sacrifice and self-

humiliation. She was more than miserable in her estrangement. But you know how she leaned on our father, how she was guided by him in all things. And she thought that to forgive were to mock his dying words."

Margaret shuddered.

"Tell me of Harry," she said timidly.

"I will not conceal from you that he has suffered, that he suffers now. But there is no bitterness in his sorrow, and he has ever been your staunch friend and champion, when there was none beside but little, faithful Alice. Yes, none beside, I answer those reproachful eyes. For your never asking forgiveness, never writing, save that one cold note, made us believe your love and grief but cold."

"What could I do, Jeanie—what could I do? And those letters he speaks of, did not they say otherwise?"

"Those letters never reached us. And you did quite right, my sister. Silence was your only course, since to speak was to fail in wifely duty. As to Harry, it is my hope, faint and distant indeed, and mine alone, for mamma does not think with me, that one day Alice may replace Margaret. If any may, it is she. They have so thought of, so striven for, the absent one together, that community of interests and sympathies has drawn them very near each other. This is my grand château en Espagne, and I do not think its foundation altogether cloudy. So take comfort, dear one. The darkness of the past is past, and present and future are all brightness."

"The same dear comforter as of old," Margaret said, smiling through her tears.

"And now," the elder sister added, as she rose and

clasped the other's hands, "is there no one else who needs a comforter? My little sister's heart will tell her what is right. Good-night." And she folded her in a close embrace, and was gone.

Margaret went to the window, and holding back one of the curtains, looked out. The lamplight, streaming through the stained glass, fell in warm rays upon the cloister pavement, but beyond all was dark. Rain plashed in dreary monotony upon the roof, winds moaned among the pines, and ever and anon lightnings lit up with fitful radiance the rocky gorges and the chafing lake.

Margaret shivered in vague alarm until a firm step resounded along the gallery and the door opened.

Instinctively she dropped the curtain, and it fell in heavy folds around, completely concealing her.

He went straight to an escritoire and began to write, never once pausing nor lifting his head until two letters, or rather notes, were finished and folded. Then he unlocked a desk, carefully examined and selected various papers, and inclosing them with the last note, sealed and directed the envelope.

His face was toward Margaret, and she trembled before the anguish written there. His lips were sternly compressed, and his whole bearing was of one bracing himself for a great struggle.

When he had finished the letter, he still held it for an instant, the proud resolution in his eyes relenting as they looked upon it. Then with an impatient gesture, he tossed it from him, and bowing his head upon his arms crossed on the table, sighed.

Then Margaret glided from her involuntary concealment. She laid her hand upon his arm. The old love

which had never died, though buried deep beneath grief and pride, and anger, conquered her now, and she could have bowed down before him, humbly penitent for the bitterness of the past. Would he now receive her? Had his love also lived on through all? Did he sorrow because he deemed she loved him not, or because—ah! the darkness of that far, far past into which she could not see.

She waited, her hand upon his arm. The touch was unfelt, and he stirred not beneath it. She paused in uncertainty, and her glance fell upon the letter he had tossed from him. It was addressed to herself. Suddenly it flashed upon her what had nearly been the end of all. The words overheard in the bakery near Sendlinger Thor occurred to her, and the hour of his departure, she saw now, was that of her restoration to her mother. And he was leaving her without one word, without one look, with but this written farewell.

The other letter, it too lay with the superscription uppermost—to the Baroness Waldien!

The proud blood rushed to her brow. She removed her hand and turned toward the door. But one glance at the bowed figure of that strong man detained her. She could but trust in his honor—she was his wife, and her place still at his side. Love her he might not, yet she felt through her whole soul that whatsoever he did, whatsoever he wrote, she was safe in his honor, and, flushing crimson, she sank upon her knees beside him, and bowed her head also on his arm.

He started up. Not so Margaret. She lay still, flushing yet more deeply beneath his gaze, her long bright lashes glistening dewily, her red lips quivering in a tremulous smile.

Ernst gazed as one in a dream. Then he averted his eyes.

"Why are you here, Margaret? Are you come to mock me with your joy? Go—you unman me. How shall I do that which I must, you smiling on me thus?"

"What must you do?" she asked softly, laying both hands upon his shoulder and forcing him to look at her. "I will tell you. You must forgive me. You must forget all this weary time. You must be happy once again."

He listened incredulously. And when she rose and stood before him, her arms folded, her head bent as one awaiting her sentence, he too rose and held out his hand silently. She laid hers in it. He did not speak at first. Emotion after emotion swept over his face, as gusts cloud stormy seas. Margaret trembled, and understood not.

"Do you then fully and freely forgive?" he asked.

"Even as you forgive."

"And when we are parted you will think of me, when you think of me—with friendliness?"

"Why should we part?" she almost whispered.

He did not answer immediately. He was gathering firmness ere he spoke again:

"You must not tempt me thus. Your happiness will be my comfort in my wanderings, and men, they say, forget the past in action."

"Forget! I know that well," she thought.

"If—if—" she said timidly—then began afresh. "I am your wife, and if you send me not from you in anger, will remain with you."

"You will that I should not leave you?" he asked, surprised.

"Never." Her voice trembled, but as she summoned courage to lift her eyes that must have told him what words failed in, they fell on Aimée's letter.

"Can we not be friends again?" she hastened to add steadily.

"You will that we return to the old friendship?"

"As if it had never been broken." The tone clear and cold now.

"Then, by the memory of that friendship, I promise, Margaret, to be evermore as a faithful friend. The past——"

"Is a sealed book—a forgotten dream," Margaret answered with quick pride. "But ah! what sorrowful months we might have been spared, had mamma but received your letters, the last of which only came."

Ernst colored violently as he asked:

"Did they show you that?"

"It was that which told me how I had wronged your noble heart," she replied in a low tone.

"Then you thought me so base as to allow blame to rest upon the innocent without one effort to remove it?"

She blushed, and answered nothing. She dared not probe the recent wounds—she only knew now that not hate alone had made her misery.

In her embarrassment she took up the letter addressed to her, saying:

"This is mine, is it not?"

"It was for you, it is for no one now. Your forgiveness has made it no longer necessary."

"May I not have it?"

"As you will," he answered indifferently.

She gave him her hand.



"A glad good-night," she said, "and a happy morrow. Methinks all our morrows must be happy now."

And with a smile upon her lips she left him.

When she had gained her turret-chamber, thrown on a white dressing-robe, and unbound her hair, she sat down and broke the seal. She read therein:

"Do you remember, Margaret, my last words to you? Whatever befalls, endeavor not to hate, only to forget me. Peace has befallen you. The love of your mother is yours once more. And I leave you, for well I know that otherwise you can not be happy. While I live shall my presence trouble you no more. When I die you will know, and then you will forgive  
"E. I. Z."

Inclosed was a package of business papers, a glance at which showed Margaret that they served to endow her with all his property, and that they bore the same date as that last letter to her mother.

She smiled in triumph, twisting them together and burning them at the flame of her lamp. When the last spark died out she went to the window and threw it open. The storm-wind still raged, but no more it smote her heart with fear. As it blew chilly upon her brow, tossing back her hair, she felt in its fierce wrestling an element of strength, all the strength within her rose up to meet it, and she felt that, heaven being merciful, she could and would conquer her fate. She would win Ernst's love, or, failing that, would be to Ivar a leal friend.

She slept, and for the first time since her marriage were her dreams unhaunted by a stern spirit upbraiding for a broken oath.

Ernst slept not until long after. The first watch of the night was spent by him, not in bright dreams of the future, but in earnest preparation for daily trials which he knew awaited him. It was one thing to be calmly gentle beneath scornful glance and bitter word, knowing them the while the inevitable result of his own sin—and quite another to be stoically friendly when those sweet eyes met his kindly, and those dear lips smiled upon him.

## XXVI.

"Be still, sad heart, and cease repining !  
Behind the clouds is the sun still shining ;  
Thy fate is the common fate of all—  
Into each life some rain must fall—  
Some days must be dark and dreary."

"Do you indeed not regret your decision, Margaret? Even now it is not too late to retract, if your heart fails from remaining here alone with me. Do not hesitate to tell me."

They were standing, the husband and wife, upon the ruined parapet, and she was gazing eagerly and perhaps also somewhat tearfully, after the traveling carriage, from which, as it disappeared among the trees, Alice's handkerchief fluttered the last farewell.

She turned at Ernst's words, mockingly replying,

"Do you indeed not regret your decision, Ivar? Even now it is not too late to retract. Do not hesitate to make off to America or to Asia."

Ernst regarded her in astonishment.

"What do you mean? Who could have told——"

"Ah! walls have ears, Sir Count, and the walls of a certain bakery near the Sendlinger Thor especially acute ones."

"Margaret!"

"Herr Count!" she responded, mimicking his air of bewilderment.

"What do you know of the Sendlinger Thor?"

"What do I know of the Sendlinger Thor? Historical?" And folding her hands demurely, she continued in the monotonous tone of a child repeating a lesson learned by rote: "The Sendlinger Thor is an entrance to old Munich, now fallen partly into decay. It is chiefly memorable in that there was fought the last battle of the insurrectionists in the early part of the eighteenth century. There fell the brave Sibal-dus and his gallant sons. The other leaders, save only the student Plinganser, suffered death at the hands of Austria. Saith tradition, years after, when one day the Elector hunted in the forest with his train, there met him a maimed and aged mendicant, observing whose destitution his Highness, moved with pity, inquired his name. When he learned that it was Plinganser, he dismounted, placed the old hero upon his own horse, and walked beside him bareheaded into the city, through the same Sendling Gate where the patriot once fought. And as long as he lived was Plinganser honored and cherished as a brother by the noble Elector. Vide Baron Waldien's notes on Munich."

Ernst smiled.

"So far, so good," he said; "but, my erudite historian, you put me not off thus."

"And may not one wander into a shop where the loquacious Bäckerin, naming no names, relates her family history, as is always done in novels? And may not one, seated in an inner room to rest, overhear a new-comer's plans of travel, without incurring the penalty of so rigid a cross-examination?"

"And how did you explain to yourself my desertion?" he asked.

He was forced to bend low in order to catch her reply.

"I thought you heart-weary, and not unreasonably, of my unforgiving temper."

"O Margaret! could you doubt——"

He stopped, the color mounting to his brow.

Margaret's whole attention was engrossed by a chameleon-lizard which had changed to a granite gray as she pushed at him with the point of her parasol, where he lay ensconced in the crevice of the rock. Some dim, envious longing for the power thus to conceal her flushed face, passed through her mind as she stooped. But presently she raised herself, and was the first to break the silence.

"What shall we do on this bright morning? Know that I hold you now my *preux chevalier*."

"A ramble, a ride, a row, or a book. At your service for any or all of these," he replied.

"A book! 'Books in the running brooks' are the only ones most appropriate to this sunshine. What say you to a ramble right up this mountain-side? We can there peruse the running brooks at our leisure, and I'm sure there are stones to deliver any number of sermons. Do you approve my selection?"

"I do, indeed, and place myself entirely at your disposal. Shall we go now?"

She nodded, and, springing from ledge to ledge, descended the parapet, staying at the base to tie on the large straw hat which had fallen upon her shoulders.

"If mamma were here," she said, her fingers busied

with the ribbons, "she would scold me for wandering about hatless in the sun, transforming myself into a very 'nut-brown mayde.'"

For a moment Ernst made no reply. Then he said abruptly :

"You can never be happy, separated from her."

"From whom ? The nut-brown mayde ? I do not think we shall be separated after to-day," Margaret laughed. "But, Ivar, hear me. From my own dear mother I am no more separated. You have reunited us, and we can not again be divided. Though during the coming winter I shall be in Switzerland, and she in Scotland, still, are we parted while together in thought and in affection ? And when spring returns, will not you and I return with it to dear auld Scotland ? Whither thou goest I will go—unless, indeed, you would have me leave you. That will I believe, if ever again you speak thus to me."

Her hand was in Ernst's while he assisted her up the rocks. He grasped it tighter for reply.

They gained the summit of a cliff, and Margaret stopped to look back.

Far below lay the castle, its massive towers diminished in the distance, and lower yet the lake sparkled in the sunlight and leaped into white foam before the breezes sweeping over.

She started as she surveyed the onward ascent, and, in answer to Ernst, pointed to a wild pathway winding farther up the mountain.

"That," she said, "is the path I followed when I lost my way, and must have lost my life had it not been for you. Do you remember?"

Little need for that question, had she looked at him

when she spoke. But absently she gazed, in thought again pursuing the perilous path.

"Margaret, it pains you to be here," Ernst said. "There are other ways up. I did not intend to lead you to this."

She smiled sadly.

"I would like to go there again. I have never been there since that day," she said.

On then they clambered, until they reached once more together the brink of the ravine.

Very different its aspect now from that in summer verdure. October frosts had indeed clothed in scarlet, gold, and purple many a tree and shrub and vine clinging to the stern gray precipices. But many also had turned pale and perished beneath the icy touch. And the fearful cliffs, the foaming torrent far down the gorge, revealed themselves in all their terrors.

Margaret shuddered and covered her eyes, clinging to Ernst's arm.

The cave, it was there, on the unseen face of that stupendous crag. She looked toward it eagerly, lifting her hand to shade off the sunbeams; and as she did so, that tiny thread-like line in her upraised wrist might be clearly traced.

"Ah!" she thought, "they are his—the cross and its power. I know that only too well. But—when we are one, where will the power be then?"

Blushing at the thought, she touched the sign with her lips, blushing yet more as she glanced shyly up at Ernst. He stood forgetful of her—she sighed. And yet the moment after he said:

"If a month ago you had stood here, you had hardly thanked me for that life saved. Do you——"

"Ah dear Ivar!" she interrupted, "'let the dead past bury its dead.' Is the present a vacuum so utter that we must needs people it with these restless, unhappy ghosts?"

"Can you forget the past?" he asked moodily.

"All, all," she hastened to reply, "if only we are friends."

He was thinking of the far away bright past, she but of the trial-time. And he was still there, when he spoke again.

"You have said that we are friends. Do you remember your old definition of friendship?"

She bent her head, replying:

"Jeder Freund ist des andern Sonne und Sonnenblume zugleich; er zieht und er folgt."

"Can that be now between us?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Now and ever."

"Could you trust, could you follow me now?"

"As before," she answered, while her color deepened and her eyes sought the ground.

And she saw not the kindling flash of his. She only heard the single word "thanks," coldly uttered, as it seemed to her.

"Friends, only friends forever," she moaned to herself.



## XXVII

'DEAR as remembered kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned,  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,  
O death in life, the days that are no more.'

THE library was gloomy in the twilight. The fire, kindled rather for cheeriness than warmth, was dying out upon the hearth, and the embers threw but a flickering and uncertain light around, leaving the farther end of the apartment in total darkness. The rain beat in against the windows, the wind swept shrilly through the cloisters.

Margaret, entering, was heart-chilled in the dismal atmosphere. She stood long upon the hearth, lost in thought, her head bowed, her hands loosely clasped together. Then, sighing, sank upon the sofa.

"Is it all over? And is this to endure forever? No end, no end?" she murmured.

And drooping her brow on her hand, she sat watching gloomily the sparks flashing out and disappearing one by one. Thus evanescent, thus sinking into deeper gloom, she thought, are life's bright moments.

A touch upon her shoulder. Still she did not move.

"My child," it was Ernst's voice then, "what is——"

"Ay, you may well call me child," she interrupted bitterly. "It seems that to you I must always prove myself weak and childish."

But as she met his sorrowful gaze she softened and said more gently:

"Bear with me yet a little, Ivar. I will learn of you to be strong."

"If you are unhappy——"

"Hush, hush," she cried, "it is the doleful evening—the darkness. Ring for lights, and we will make it cheerful with music. You shall have all your songs."

Lights brought, the blaze rekindled upon the hearth, Margaret took her guitar and warbled on, making her selections "from grave to gay," until the cloud passed from her spirits; and she sat enthroned on her sofa as fair and bright and joyous a household divinity as was ever worshiped within the sacred precincts of home.

Ernst, the while resting his arm upon the mantel, looked down upon her with an expression to which he but seldom gave way, and never when she could meet it.

"See, Ivar," she said, touching the chords softly and low, and gazing dreamily into the glowing embers, "see in how short a moment the flame destroys a forest lord which half a century passed in perfecting. And all to warm and cheer two idle mortals such as you and I. Might not a philosopher read therefrom a humiliating moral of the disproportion of cause and effect?"

"Not being a philosopher," was the rejoinder, "my version may differ from his. To me your image would illustrate quite another doctrine. I too glanced at the flames, and Körner's words recurred:

'We edler Geister Funken sprühten,'

a thousand sparks rising in a single flame, a thousand sparks dying out in a moment, yet each, ere dying out, adding to the light."

"And to the ashes."

"Ay. But in the universe the fire still shines on. What matter individual sparks, while the ages have light?"

"You say, then, with the poet:

'We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;  
In feelings, not in figures on a dial.  
We should count time by heart-throbs. He most lives  
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.' "

"Assuredly."

"Then, Ivar," Margaret began, after a thoughtful silence, "then were you right to call me child, if in truth 'we live in deeds.' I have counted time only by the swift progress of the sun on the dial, or by the weary watches of the night. You, indeed, have lived. Was your trial-time of poverty long ago in Munich a weary while? Is it possible for one to be content without the full measure of happiness?"

"I once thought so. I was learning then the hard lesson. False pride at the outset rendered it doubly difficult."

"And yet you are so free from *false* pride."

"He must needs have been an unapt scholar who could have learned nothing from the lowly lives around me. When a youth, it was my boast that, like Burns's man of independent mind, I looked and laughed at 'the ribbon, star, and a' that.' But the look was wist-

ful, the laugh forced. Years later, however, it was different."

"Why?"

"Because then my star, if star I could have worn, would have shone to light myself alone. In that time of struggling if it had shone for me it would also have lightened the darkness for the few friends who were groping at my side. And in the darkness they had wandered from me."

"The old bakeress, Ivar—Zozia—Ursin," Margaret eagerly exclaimed.

"That was but repaying old debts."

"Repaying indeed! But how late tea is!" and she crossed the room to ring the bell.

"Why, who on earth is Ern—whose is this, dear Ivar?" she exclaimed presently, raising a portfolio from the table at which she had paused to arrange the books upon it.

"Ernst Badarzewski? Myself," Ernst replied, approaching.

"What, an assumed name?"

"Did I not tell you? I knew none other until Zozia with my new fortune gave me also my new and rightful name. But what is in a name?"

Her avoidance but now of that name had not escaped him. But that moment he was like a man desperately wounded with many wounds, who rather courts than wards off another. Another perhaps might deaden.

She struck it home straightway.

"Very much, Ivar."

He looked down upon her troubled face, where the lashes swept the cheeks, and interpreted aright. That

## XXVIII

"HARK! the raven flaps his wing  
In the briared dell below;  
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing  
To the night-mares as they goe."

"In Poland, Ivar?" Margaret asked as, equipped for riding, she entered the library.

Ernst glanced at her wistful face, and laid aside his manuscript.

"In Poland, but not beyond reach of your call. Whither away now, fair commandant?"

"For a gallop over the hills and far away. But if I interrupt this evening, you must promise to allow me afterward to assist. May I not be your secretary? I should so like it."

"Would you? Do you not fear I shall impose upon your generous offer? No? Then see what labor is in store for you." And he laid a roll of manuscript and quires of fresh paper in a desk apart.

"There; my secretary may begin her engagement when she chooses. But she must not labor over it, else I shall dismiss her."

Margaret put on a rueful face, and bade him away to order the horses, while she practiced for her new vocation.

Accordingly, on Ernst's return he found her intent upon a sheet of paper literally covered with names, titles of books, etc.

She blushed and tossed the paper hastily aside, as he stood behind her chair and praised her clear, free handwriting. He remembered the blush when, one day long after, stored among many another trivial thing her hand had touched, he found the paper, and in one corner beneath an attempted erasure, his own name—Ernst.

It was a lovely, bright November afternoon, one of those autumnal days coming in the guise of spring, when we almost believe the bare branches stand ready to receive summer foliage instead of winter snow, and when the lingering leaves of gold and crimson seem more the rich promise of springtide than the precarious legacy of autumn. It was a day to make the heart beat joyously, the eyes brighten, the cheek glow with a deeper flush, touched by the cool, light breeze. Margaret's did so, and Ernst too caught the same spirit of gladness, for there were times when the mere being at her side was happiness sufficient.

"Oh!" she cried, as they checked their horses upon the brow of a hill and together watched the going down of the sun behind the far western mountains, "is not this truly beautiful? Does it not recall many an Italian sunset—there is so much more of softness, of haze in the distance than is wont on Alpine heights. And the glorious autumnal coloring! Ah Ivar! is not autumn the season of seasons?"

"When one is happy—yes."

"And are you not happy?" she asked wistfully,

bending forward in her saddle and laying her gloved hand upon his arm.

"Now? Very happy," and he grasped the hand.

"Happier than before——"

"No, Margaret," he answered shortly, dropping her hand and turning away.

Tears of indignation sprang to Margaret's eyes. Tears of shame, too, as the old distrust, long slumbering, awoke. "Before," there was a past in which she had no part—a sealed sepulchre, the superscription of which she could only see, not read. In all their daily intercourse, in all that friendship dear, as he had called it, he had never mentioned Aimée's name. Pride had made it stranger to her lips, and pride now urged reply.

"You misunderstand——" she began.

"Forgive me," he interrupted, "but the past, with its dead hopes, is a fearful thing between those whose hearts beat no longer together."

Margaret's eyes fairly flashed.

"He thinks to warn me thus," she thought. "He thinks to read my heart. He shall not."

And she answered with well-assumed carelessness:

"You say well. Remember the words of the poet:

'Am I, because the sweet past is no more,  
Dead as the leaves upon the graves of yore?'

or upon the hills of yore, over which we must now fly, if we would not be belated."

And off she bounded, giving Ostrolenka the reins.

More silently and less gayly they proceeded homeward, each feeling the burden of a secret and the necessity for watchfulness.

"That is not the way we came, Margaret," Ernst said, as she turned aside into another path.

"I see it is not, now. But where does it lead? It is so pretty."

"A shorter path to the main road, but more perilous."

"Is it really too dangerous? If not, let us follow, for night is falling now."

"But see, the moon is rising through the trees. Are you afraid with me?" he asked.

"Afraid! Oh! no."

There was a hesitation which Ernst failed not to mark, of which she was unconscious, her thoughts longing for solitude and home, by the shorter way.

Ernst, therefore, turned directly into it, confident of the sure-footedness of Ostrolenka, which he had made Margaret mount instead of the horse he was riding, a recent and not yet fully tried purchase for her.

The way grew wilder and wilder until it became at length a mere bridle-path suspended midway down a precipice of no very fearful height indeed, but yet dangerous enough to the timid or the careless of man or beast. The moon, through interlacing boughs, threw but a fitful and insecure guiding light upon it.

"Ivar," called Margaret, who had ridden some paces ahead, "see, my bridle is loose. Will you arrange it for me?"

He rode forward and soon set it to rights. As he again raised himself in his saddle, the moonlight fell upon his face, and Margaret was heart-struck with its sadness. She thanked him gently, and added:

"I am so sorry I chose this way. I had no idea it was so unsociable."



He smiled.

"That it will not be much longer," he replied. "After yonder angle two can ride abreast. I would give Ostrolenka the rein, she knows the path. Ride slowly, I am close behind."

At that instant a large bird, startled, rose suddenly from the tree beneath which Margaret staid, and, flapping its vast wings, fled with a shrill cry across the gorge.

Ostrolenka did not blench. But a sound far more fearful to Margaret's ear followed upon that cry, and when she turned in quick affright, horse and rider were no longer there.

The terrified animal had reared and would have plunged madly forward but that the iron grasp of Ernst forced him back upon his haunches. Only, however, for another bound and another struggle but too unequal upon a mere foothold of rock.

● Margaret listened, dizzy and faint, to the low plunge below, and gazed down with straining eyes upon the indistinguishable mass of light and shadow. But after a second, nerved by her agony, she sprang from her horse, and seeking carefully—carefully, for his sake—soon found a descent.

When at last she had gained the bottom of the defile, dread of what might be for a moment made her so weak that she was fain to sink upon the ground, pressing her face down on the cold, damp turf to shut out all possible sight. Only for one moment, however. The next, she began her dreadful task, groping among rocks and bushes for—perchance a lifeless body.

Long she sought, and at length, with a wild cry, flung herself upon her knees. Her search was over.

There lay the mangled horse in the last death-struggle—here, her delicately clad foot thrust itself into a pool of blood slowly dripping into a brook that gushed out from the base of the cliff. And here lay her husband. Was it his blood? She dared not think, but bending over, raised his head from the blood-stained turf, pillowing it upon her bosom.

The moonbeams falling upon his face, showed it pallid as death itself, and when Margaret placed her hand upon his heart the pulsation was so slight that at first she thought all was over. But she attempted to lift his right arm, from which blood was flowing, and the livid lips parted in a groan.

Thankful beyond measure for even this sign of suffering, she was able to collect her thoughts. She saw that he was faint from loss of blood, and dared not leave him thus, to seek assistance. And yet she trembled at the idea of again touching the painful wounded arm. But she summoned all her courage, and finding a penknife in his breast-pocket, tore open the sleeve and bound up the wound as best she might with handkerchief and vail. Then dipping her hand in the stream that rippled beside, she washed away the clotted gore from a gash in the temple, which had already ceased to bleed, and bathed the ghastly brow, and tried to pour the ice-cold water between the parted lips. But each attempt was vain, and he lay motionless, hardly breathing.

Then she knew she could do nothing more, and must leave him to bring aid more effectual.

She spread upon the frosty ground a heavy shawl which she had with instinctive providence snatched from her saddle, laid his head gently down upon it and

wrapped it around him. Then pressing her lips once passionately to those so cold now, she went her way without another look.

With the wind sped Ostrolenka, perils all unheeded by her reckless rider. Leaps were taken, heights were scaled at a gallop, before which at another time Ostrolenka and her mistress would both have faltered. And now the night changed. The wind blew cuttingly from the north, and from the gathering clouds through which the moon was struggling, wreaths of snow whirled blindingly into the face of the lonely traveler. She shivered with cold, deprived of the warm shawl with which she usually guarded against such sudden change, of not infrequent occurrence in these mountains. But she only urged her horse the faster, blindly though it were, thinking ever of that dark defile and the lonely sufferer there. The highway gained, it was not long before cottage-lights made themselves visible through the woods skirting the road.

As Margaret rode up, the goodman stood above in the doorway, at the head of the entrance-stairs, to see what wild thing that might be which dashed up in such mad haste. And the curly-pated children peeped beneath his arm, pushing and scrambling under that protecting power, yet shrinking back too as they whispered together of the Erl-King dread, "with crown and train," who rides so late through night and wind, and all to whisper lying promises into any little one's ears which he can hold out there in his cold fingers—father and mother hearing the while naught save the gusts rattling in the hard, dry, wintry-leaved boughs of the forest around. Through

the open door a cheerful glow from the great brick stove lighted up the dark paneled walls and oaken, brass-mounted chest of drawers, and loom and table, where sat knitting, as only Germans can knit, the placid, comfortably stout house-mother, and beside her a maiden at the spinning-wheel.

All this Margaret saw unseeing, while the man came down in answer to her summons, removing his pipe from his mouth as he greeted the lady.

"Help!" she gasped, "for one who lies wounded on the road!"

"A fall?" the man asked, with the *nonchalance* of habit.

"Yes, yes. Down from the first path that branches off this road, toward Morgarten—the dark hollow, near the turn. Bring a litter and send instantly for a surgeon—for Dr. Berger. Tell him it is Count Zalkiewski, and he must come at once. And send to the Castle for the carriage to meet us where the path—this one here to the right—joins the road. Have you a horse?"

"Yes, my Lady Countess."

"Spare it not, then. You shall be well rewarded. Money is nothing, time every thing. Quick, quick—it is for life, man!"

He hurried off, having, while receiving these directions, been duly muffled up by his daughter and his wife, who now, thrusting aside and dismissing with a hasty cuff or two the children curiously pressing round, bade Margaret dismount and at least await the return of the father with assistance.

"He is lying cold and alone. Let me go!" was the answer, as she strove to free her bridle.

But the strong, detaining hand prevented, and the poor, trembling, shivering girl was lifted from her saddle and carried, rather than led, into the cottage, where the kind souls seated her like a helpless child before the glowing hearth. And indeed a helpless child she was, until the kindly offices of the women restored warmth to her frozen limbs and to her frozen heart. The stony gaze melted from her eyes, and she wept—at first wildly, afterward more calmly.

"Lotte," said the good housewife, upon whose motherly bosom Margaret's weary head had drooped, to the young girl who knelt chafing her benumbed hands, "go thou and fetch some of the last year's wine. It will do her good now."

Margaret raised herself as the girl put the flagon to her lips.

"Let me take it to him," she said, pressing her hand. "Thanks to your great kindness, I am quite strong again, and I may not leave him longer alone."

They gave a flask, and wrapped her in warm cloaks, while she in simple heart-words thanked them. She was now so composed that when, as Lotte led up her horse, a chubby urchin, finger in mouth, pulled her dress from behind, looking up at her with great, round, wondering blue eyes, she turned, and lifting him in her arms gave him a kiss, which went straight to the mother's heart.

Then she set forth again, despairing no more.

When she checked her horse upon the well-remembered spot, such had been her speed that it was scarce an hour since she had been there before. She had grown strangely hopeful, and more than half expected to find Ernst conscious.

She sprang down from crag to crag, and ere long reached the old maple where crimson-leaved branches, drooping to the earth, concealed the rivulet and him who lay beside.

She listened with suspended breath, parting the boughs, but in sudden terror daring not to look.

Not a sound broke the stillness of the night save the near babble of the rivulet and the reiterated hooting of an owl in the forest overhead upon the cliffs. Now the moon glanced through hurrying clouds—and again all was dark. But that one glance struck Margaret with dismay. Beside the brook he lay, rigid and deathlike as before.

In an instant she was at his side, had raised his head from the hard ground, and sheltered him from the night-wind. She bent over him in agony.

"Ernst, my own Ernst," she cried, "speak to me, but one word—one word! O God! it is too late!"

Did she see in the dim light a momentary quivering of his eyelids as she murmured that name passionately again and again? Or was it but a shadow flickering athwart his brow from the tossing maple boughs?

She fancied that he moved, and she tried to make him swallow the wine she had brought. But it was all in vain; and helpless she sat, while moments lagged like hours—dreary thoughts of the past, vain thoughts of what the future might have been, thronging on her.

From time to time she roused, as upon the stillness of the night arose some sound louder than the rippling of the brook or the sighing of the wind through the dusky pines that, clustered upon cliffs and promontories on either side of the defile, shut out with gaunt, weird boughs the uncertain light of stormy skies. Hoping it

the sound of coming rescue, she would raise her voice and shout until the dying echoes and the nearer crash of falling tree or rock, followed by deepening quietude, told her no human being was at hand. And when through drifting cloud and intercepting branches now and then the moon looked down, she gazed with trembling earnestness upon the face upturned to hers, in terror lest that which was so like to death might be itself.

She could not pray. All the hardness of those heavy months was pressing on her heart again. She crouched there with a murderer's conscience, crushed down, and staring in the face a dreader than a murderer's retribution.

o Sudden blasts twisted the naked boughs into semblance of shadowy forms, and the falling snow in gusts advanced or retreated—mist-clad wraiths of the wild wind's raising. And an ancient rhythm haunted her, moaning in that moaning wind, while aye and anon the neighboring owl repeated his doleful cry :

“Hark! the raven flaps his wing  
In the briered dell below;  
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing  
To the night-mares as they goe.”

All has an end, however, and in the end her cries were answered.

Carefully the four strong men lifted Ernst upon the litter and bore him on to the awaiting carriage, where also awaited Dr. Berger.

And when Margaret, seated in the carriage, supporting her husband, silently extended her hand to the Doctor, and besought with eloquent eyes the hope she

dared not ask in words, the kind old man replied with a grave smile and a nod :

“Yes, yes, my dear young lady. Careful nursing, indeed, and good medical attendance——”

So then it was no death-owl sang that night “in the briered dell below.”



## XXIX.

"Tief im Dunkel glanst ein Licht."

THE morning sun was streaming brightly into the library where Margaret sat at her writing-desk, upon which lay a freshly-copied manuscript to which she was putting the last finishing touches.

Very lovely was she this morning. The sunlight touched into the splendor of red gold the waves of hair drooping low upon the shell-like ears and gathered in a simple knot behind. Her dress of silver-gray swept the floor in heavy folds, and contrasted well with the purity of her brow and the blush-rose on her cheek. Her lips were parted in an unconscious smile, and as from time to time she glanced up from her occupation, her eyes smiled as well.

When the door opened behind her, she spoke without turning or pausing in her task:

"Ursin, take up your master's chocolate, and ask him to send word when he is ready for me to read. I am afraid he will want to come down, but he must not on any account; Dr. Berger says he must not."

She was startled by a hand upon her shoulder, and, turning, met Ernst's smile. She started up, very grave.

"O Ivar! you ought not!" she said reproachfully.

"You know the Doctor said so. And your broken arm just getting so much better, too! You are the most unreasonable, impatient— Why, who on earth arranged this sling?"

And she busied herself with its folds until he caught her hand in his left. She struggled to free it, her color deepening.

"You are trying to propitiate your nurse, are you? Well, she must not scold any more, especially as you do really look so well. But I shall tell the Doctor, most assuredly, and see if he does not give you up as an incorrigible, self-willed——"

"And do you imagine it is Dr. Berger who has saved my life?" he asked, still keeping possession of her hand and looking down into her blushing face.

"Why, of course. Ursin and I certainly claim to be excellent nurses, but we did not set your broken arm nor mend your broken head."

"No, you did far more. Whose voice, whose touch but yours, calmed me through the wildest delirium of fever? And"—sinking his voice—"but for your gentle presence I had not cared to live."

He dropped her hand and turned away. .

"Have you had your chocolate?" Margaret asked softly, putting away her writing-materials.

"I really don't know—yes, certainly—are you going?"

"Not if you want me."

"Ay. I would ask you something, Margaret."

"Well?"

He said nothing more, but continued his restless walk.

Margaret resumed her seat, and again taking up the

manuscript, occupied herself with it for some moments. Then she rose, saying:

"Well, my Lord Count, what think you of your secretary? Here is your manuscript complete."

"What, has my nurse really been secretary too?"

"Really."

He drew a desk toward him and attempted to unlock it, but unsuccessfully.

"Will you open it for me and lay the manuscript within? I am not very expert with my left hand," he said.

"Oh!" she cried, raising the lid and letting it fall again, "is this the way you keep your papers? For shame!"

"I see your orderly little fingers are eager to put them to rights. Will you do it?"

She smiled and began the task, he the while standing behind her chair, not watching her, but gazing absently upon the floor.

"Those are letters from old student friends," he said, as she appealed to him, lifting a packet, "and that is my mother's, you remember. Lay them aside to read if you care to do so."

Suddenly Margaret started as though she had been stung. A sealed letter dropped from a handful of papers, but before Ernst could see, she had pushed it from her, and now, with trembling fingers and passion-blinded eyes, pored intent upon a blank folio. But Ernst could not fail to perceive her agitation.

"What have you there, Margaret?"

"Oh! nothing," she returned in icy tones, hurriedly addressing herself to her self-imposed task.

"Nothing? And does nothing change you thus in

a moment? Will you not tell me? For clearly, something, fancied or real, has come between us. Will you not trust me, Margaret?"

She flushed and trembled, but lifted a steady gaze to his, while she drew forth the letter.

He took it, glanced at the address, then earnestly at her, before he broke the seal, with a strange smile—a smile that baffled her.

"Will you read?" he said, offering it.

She drew back.

"I am no spy upon your actions," she said hoarsely.

"I do not demand—I refuse—your tardy confidence. I scorn a right demanded."

"Nevertheless, I demand my right of confidence," he interrupted, still with the same smile. "Read, Margaret."

He unfolded the letter and held it for her, throwing his arm around her shoulders.

"For months, my sister Aimée, I have hoped for, have anticipated this moment. I met and knew you at once, having kept trace of the change of name your marriage brought, and seeing in your face our mother's, too clearly for a moment's doubt. I sought you, watched and listened, now resolved to claim you, now repelled by your persistent turning away from the darkness of our childhood. I blame you not. Yours is a sunny nature, shrinking from the shadow of trouble, and God knows I would not have it fall on you. When it was upon me, I came not near you, lest it should. Upon your own words—I have striven to forget them, I can not—the world cares not for the hovel in the valley when it stands by

the palace on the mountain. Nor I—' was based at length my resolve of silence. That resolve should never have wavered, though it could not kill the brother's love, were I not going where you will hear of me no more. I go, and alone. My Margaret, mine no longer, I may meet never again. You love, are loved, are happy—I but love. Therefore by the sacred memory of our mother, I make of you one demand. She is your friend. Let her be your sister, and pay to her ever the debt of affection your conscience claims for

ERNST IVAR ZALKIEWSKI."

Margaret sat motionless, without a word, but her changeful face had need of none. It was burning with blushes, and she would have stolen away, had it not been for the dear constraint of that firm-clasping arm. How safe she was within its shelter! And she had struggled from it all this while. How patient, how long-suffering his love! And yet she instinctively put up her hand to shield hers from his reading.

In the midst of all her thoughts came Aimée. She remembered how she had one day remarked that Count Falkenstein and Aimée were most unlike in appearance for brother and sister. And how Aimée had said quickly: "But then, you know, he is not really my brother." To Margaret's surprised inquiry, she had added that Max's mother was her godmamma, had brought her up, and—no, she did not know what her own name was, or that she had a relation in the world—and it was very unkind of Marguerite, who had so many, to make her think of—to make her think. Margaret had soothed her as she might a fretted child, and the subject was never again named.

She strove to tell Ernst this, but speech would not come. So content was she under the shadow of his great love as at last she knew it, that she would not move lest it should vanish as a dream.

But her downcast eyes rested upon a sheet of paper, upon the fair surface of which were inscribed only four words, in a wavering hand so like her own that her attention was attracted—"Mother, I am—dead."

"What is this?" she asked, lifting it and turning to her husband.

He grew very pale and took the paper from her. Then, as she looked up at him, surprised, he silently turned the reverse of the sheet.

There was only a date.

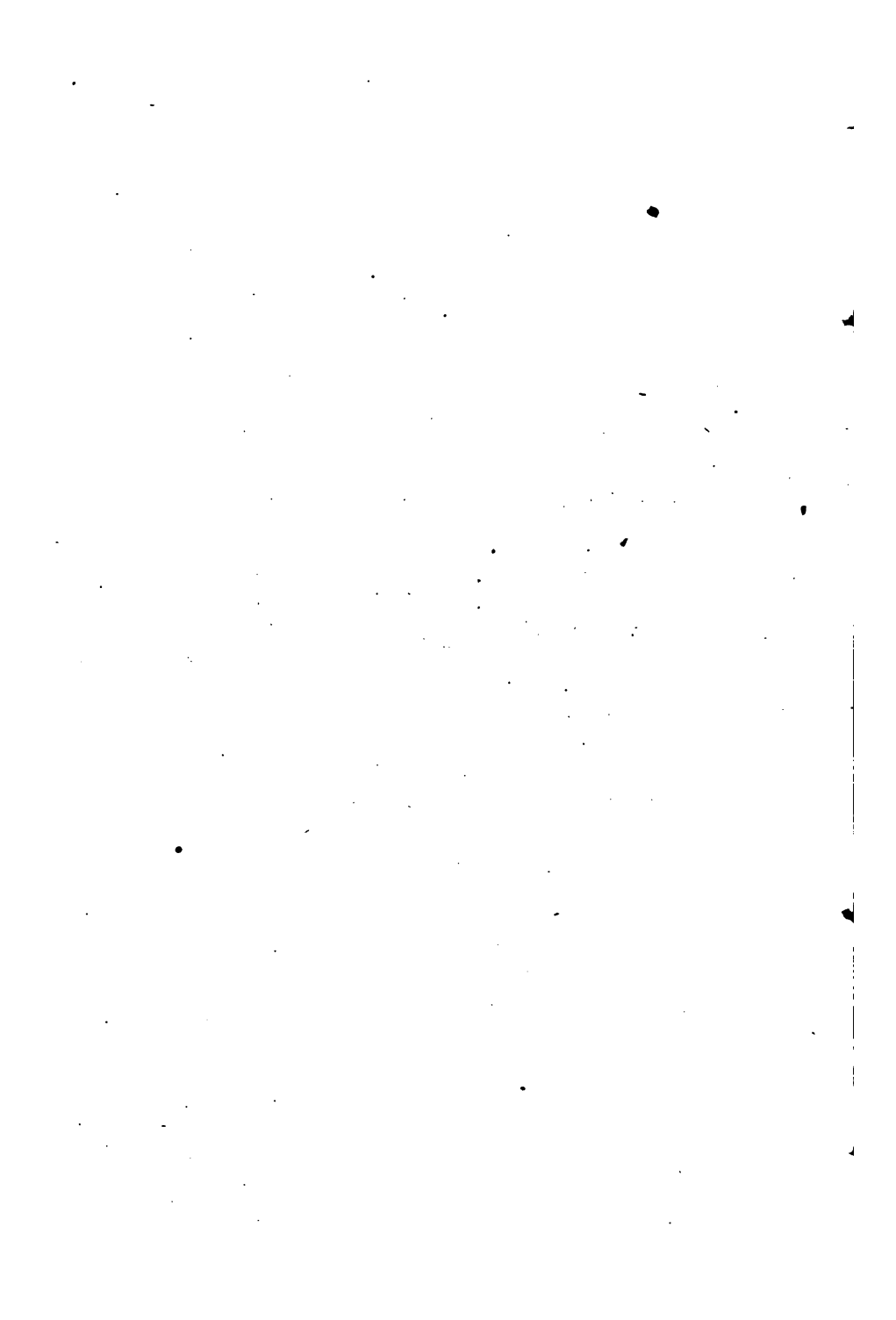
She remembered that. And his meaning flashed upon her. She deliberately folded the paper, and tearing it across once and again, dropped the fragments upon the carpet.

His arm drew her closer yet.

"Margaret!" he said in a low and thrilling voice.

The bowed head sank yet lower until it rested on his arm, and the quivering lips parted with one word—

"Ernst!"



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